

**JESUS AS THE SON OF MAN,  
THE LITERARY CHARACTER:  
*A Progression of Images***

J. Harold Ellens

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J. Harold Ellens

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## Foreword

From 1980 to 2001, Dr. J. Harold Ellens served on the Advisory Board of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity as a member and, for four years, as its Chairperson. Throughout that time he was a generous supporter of the Institute and its research activities and a wise counselor as well.

Over the course of his long career, Dr. Ellens has served concurrently as a pastor, a professor of philosophy and psychology, a U.S. Army colonel, and a psychotherapist in private practice. He was the founding editor and for fifteen years the editor-in-chief of the *Journal of Psychology and Christianity*. He holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Calvin College (1953), a Bachelor of Divinity degree from Calvin Theological Seminary (1956), and Master's degrees in Theology (Calvin Theological Seminary, 1965), New Testament and Christian Origins (Princeton Theological Seminary, 1965), and Middle Judaism and Christian Origins (University of Michigan, 2000). He holds a Ph.D. in the Psychology of Human Communications (Wayne State University, 1970), and currently, at the age of 71, he is looking forward to completing his second Ph.D., in Middle Judaism and Christian Origins, at Michigan at the end of this year. He is the author, coauthor, or editor of 86 books and over 165 professional journal articles in the many fields in which he has been active. Late last year he completed his tasks as the editor of and a contributor to a four-volume work entitled *The Destructive Power of Religion: Violence in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam*, scheduled to be published late this year by Praeger.

In October of 2002, the Institute held a dinner to thank Dr. Ellens for his support and to acknowledge his participation in the Institute's intellectual life. After the dinner, Dr. Ellens delivered an earlier form of this paper as part of the Institute's public lecture series. He spoke to an enthusiastic audience that quite overwhelmed the capacity of the Institute's lecture hall. Dr. Ellens' paper concerns itself with a difficult question: What did Jesus mean when he referred to himself as "Son of Man"? If we understand this question as a purely historical one, we may never be able to answer it satisfactorily. While several plausible answers come to mind, we may never be able to say that one or another answer is the most correct one. The forensic evidence, so to speak, is unavailable.

What Dr. Ellens offers in this paper is a different kind of answer: not an argument for one or another interpretation, but a compelling suggestion that Jesus' own understanding of the epithet might have changed as the events of his life unfolded and that at various stages of his career Jesus had one or another of the various plausible interpretations in mind. In presenting this argument Dr. Ellens deals in his characteristically energetic manner with a wide range of source materials and with the scholarship surrounding the "Son of Man" question as well as with modern ideas of literary criticism and developmental psychology. His startlingly original approach is not doctrinaire but instead offers a way of reconciling many competing points of view.

The Institute is a center for scientific and historical research into the sources of western civilization. It is also a center for the informed interpretation of those sources. In this paper, Dr. Ellens demonstrates the rich interaction between these two streams of activity.

Over the course of his long association with our Institute, Dr. Ellens fashioned a new role and set a new standard for Board membership: what is wanted is not merely financial support, but joyous participation in the Institute's intellectual life. We set out to honor him last fall, but as we listened to his paper, we realized that, after all, he was also honoring us!

Rafael Chodos  
Chairperson of the Advisory Board,  
Institute for Antiquity and Christianity  
August 2003



# Jesus as the Son of Man, the Literary Character:

## A Progression of Images

J. Harold Ellens

### I. Introduction

As we know him from the New Testament and other early Christian literature, Jesus is a literary character, not an historical<sup>1</sup> character. That does not mean that he was not a real figure in time. It does not mean that there was no person named Jesus who lived in Nazareth about two thousand years ago. Nor does it mean that he did not do the things the gospels tell us he did. It means only that the figure in the narrative is a character in a story. It means that we cannot get behind the story to find the historic man. We can only try to know and appreciate the character in the drama that the literature about him portrays. We cannot determine the degree to which the character in the story corresponds to a man who once lived in Galilee, or the degree to which the early Christian stories about what he did and said correspond to what he really did and said.

Jesus is one of the more generative yet most mysterious figures in literature. Though he is a provocative and revered character, the historic man behind the literary character is one of the least known of literature's major *dramatis personae*. He is, of course, one of the most venerated but nonetheless one of the least accessible persons, though we can know the literary character, Jesus, quite well. Undoubtedly, as historic persons, Confucius was greater, Plato wiser, Philo more sensibly philosophical, and Alexander the Great more accomplished. Jesus is nonetheless a fascinating character, and as such a fixture in human history. Moreover, quite like the people of the ancient world, many of us would really like to figure him out; that is, we would like to unpack Jesus, the literary character, in such a way as to discern behind that figure the historic person. However, that Jesus keeps slipping from our fingertips. Just when we think we have grasped him, we discover that we have really laid hold of a character in a story whom we have interpreted in our own image. We are all interested in Moses, Buddha, Mohammed, the Hebrew Prophets, the memorable Rabbis of the Talmudic Period, Maimonides, and to some extent Confucius; but we have a greater sense of having come to know them well enough for our purposes. The Jesus of that moment in time two thousand years ago seems always to stand just beyond us, behind a screen, even in our clearest vision.

Perhaps this is because there are so many different Jesuses to deal with, and they are all literary characters. There is the unique Jesus of each of the Synoptic Gospels as well as the composite Jesus of the combined Synoptic Gospels, none of which is the Jesus behind the Synoptic Gospels, though we sometimes think we catch glimpses of that one in the Gospel of Mark or in Q. There is the Jesus of the Gospel of Thomas, the Jesus of Q whom James M. Robinson and his team have been at great pains to tease out into the open, and the Jesus of the Gospel of John. There is the Jesus of the Epistle to the Hebrews, of the

Pauline Corpus, and of the Apocalypse of John. Then there are the various Jesuses of the extra-canonical epistles and other gospels, the Jesus of the Patristics, and the Jesus of the Ecumenical Creeds. None of these is the same Jesus as any of the other Jesuses. Now we have the Jesuses of Marcus J. Borg, Raymond E. Brown, John Dominic Crossan, Bart D. Ehrman, Leander E. Keck, Burton L. Mack, John P. Meier, James M. Robinson, Geza Vermes, A. N. Wilson, Walter Wink, N. T. Wright, and others.

Attempting to entice the historic Jesus out of the underbrush invariably lands us in a large swamp where scholars have mired themselves hopelessly for at least 150 years—and probably, one should say, for 2,000 years. Out of the quicksand and mire they have cried out, as Albert Schweitzer did, in one loud outburst, and then they have disappeared from that scholarly scene, abandoning the quest, as Schweitzer did also. For the purposes of this paper I shall make the assumption that I can employ resources from the Hebrew Bible, Second Temple Judaism, and the four canonical gospels to identify a Jesus to whom we can throw a long rope and draw him out of the swamp, without getting too far into it ourselves. It is important in this quest to find some specific high ground from which to work, acknowledging the strengths and limitations in perspective one will have when adopting that vantage point. The high ground from which I shall work here is that of the claim made at the outset, that in our available sources, upon which we must depend for our inquiry, Jesus is a literary character and not an historical character. This paper, then, is a quest for the literary Jesus.

Others have invested great energy and scholarly wisdom in the "Quest of the Historical Jesus."<sup>2</sup> From Wilhelm Wrede to Albert Schweitzer the foundations for that quest were laid. James Robinson, with his heroic efforts to build upon those foundations, first in his republication of Schweitzer, followed by his own significant study entitled *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus*, and then his long life's work that led him ultimately to the publication of the critical edition of Q, has done more for searching out the historic person, Jesus of Nazareth, than any other scholar has done. Others have contributed significant research regarding the historic Jesus, either reinforcing or reacting to Robinson's work. Ben Witherington III has attempted to summarize the century of that search in his book *The Jesus Quest: The Third Search for the Jew of Nazareth*.

The difficulty with the history of scholarship in the quest for the historic Jesus lies largely in the fact that the further that quest has progressed, the less Jesus we have left. The hope that motivates an inquiry into any historic person is usually the expectation that the more we research the issue, the more we will know and understand about the figure being examined. As the research regarding Jesus has advanced, the data disclosed amount mainly to what we might call a negative result. We know more and more that we know less and less about the person from Nazareth. One might argue, of course, that such an outcome is a gain, and in a certain sense it is: a gain in our understanding that we know virtually nothing objectively about that historic man. We know more clearly that the claims that have been made regarding him in the past are largely mythic—that is, confessional—story and that they are unverifiable as real testimony regarding who the real Jesus was.



Hal Childs<sup>3</sup> has argued that there is no possible way in which any figure of the past can be known as the historic figure that he or she was, since Werner Karl Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty certifies that any research we do on any such figure casts a light upon the object of our inquiry which recasts that very figure in terms of our own personal perspective. That lens through which we look at the object of our research may be one that we employ consciously or unconsciously, but in any case, the "truth" we perceive through it is highly refracted or distorted. It is like looking down a deep well and seeing only our own face reflected to us, rather than the face of the one deep in the sources and flows of history for whom we are looking. We cannot stand again in the first century and see a first-century Jesus. We can only stand in the twenty-first century and look for a first-century Jesus, without being able to catch the perspective or context of the first century with any degree of accuracy. Thus the Jesus we see is the Jesus made in our own twenty-first-century image. We are, therefore, left with knowing Jesus, a literary character, in a story that we can read and may be able to understand to some degree. We cannot know the man bound in the time frame of the first century. Nor can we discern, therefore, the degree to which the literary character and the historic person may correspond to each other.

One might argue, and even be forced to conclude, that the historical investigation has reduced Jesus so severely because he really was, as an historic person, no greater or of no more significance than the quest for the historic Jesus has come to see him. If there were some way to confirm that as fact, the manner in which the quest has peeled away the dogma and myth from the character of the Jesus in the story would clearly be of great service to us and to the truth. The difficulty arises, however, in the fact that each researcher in the quest for the historic Jesus, even each member of the Jesus Seminar which has done so much good work for the historical quest, has come away from the scholarly task with an image of the historic Jesus very different from that held by any of his or her colleagues. Mack thinks Jesus was a philosophical Greek Cynic, Borg sees him as a Galilean Mystic, Crossan as a monk, Robinson as an ascetic, Ehrman as an apocalyptic prophet, and Meier as a Marginal Jew.

It is my current perception that the figure who has become the end product of the various quests for the historic Jesus is sufficiently diminished that he cannot carry the weight of the story developed about him. That is a fatal flaw in the historical quest. If one is to find out who the real historic person, Jesus of Nazareth, was, it is crucial to ask the question through the lens of what the story says, not through a lens which has pared away as much of the story as possible. That is, the story about Jesus, in which he is a leading character, is a story told by people for whom the story served a significant purpose. Assuming that those people were not psychotic, it must be understood at the outset that they told the story about Jesus in a fashion that seemed to them to ring true to what they knew about him and what they felt compelled to say about him. That does not mean that the story they told was literally his story, but they could not have gotten away with telling a story which did not make some kind of sense in terms of the kind of person they knew him to be or to have been. The story had to be the sort of story that could be carried by the character

of the person whom they made the main character in the story. The residual Jesus of the historical quest cannot carry the weight of the story those early narrators claimed was his story. The Jesus of the quest is too diminished, too emasculated. The results of the historical quest are consequently not believable as a description of the man from Nazareth who actually existed at a specific point in time.

That is to say, while we know that stories serve ulterior purposes and are fashioned in the image and need of the persons telling them, there are certain things you simply cannot get away with in telling a story. For example, if you expected people to believe your story about the Wright brothers and their primitive flying machine, then, however romantically or heroically you told it, you could not say that they invented a space and time traveling contraption as well, that they flew to Andromeda and back, writing a secret report of their escapade which the CIA has kept from us for nefarious reasons, and that this whole thing was really the basis for the story of Jules Verne about a trip to the moon. You could not get away with that for many reasons: Verne's story was written before the Wright brothers were born, the CIA did not exist until fifty years after the Wright brothers' flights, the technology available at the beginning of the twentieth century would not support space travel, and we still do not have time travel machines. However mythic the story, it must have certain plausible groundings in the characters and times it represents.

The character of Jesus left over after being pared down to its empirical and irreducible essentials by the quest for the historic Jesus does not have enough character left to carry the story, however mythic it may be. The question we must be asking is not, What can be empirically demonstrated to be the irreducible minimum of data that we have about the historic person from first-century Nazareth, and therefore, What mythic material must we pare away to get to that figure? The question before us, if we want to know better who the real Jesus was, is instead the following: What kind of person must he have been and how must he have behaved intellectually, psychologically, affectively, materially, socially, and spiritually, to account for the mythic story that those who knew him or were informed about him could honestly tell and get away with it?

The answer to that question can only be discerned by analysis of the literary character in the story, the manner in which he is made to function in the narrative, and the nature of the outcome, the denouement. Moreover, in order to discern the nature of that character and his function, thus equipping one to discern clues about the real figure behind the literary character, one must know a lot about the forces at play in his context at the time he lived, thus getting some sense of how he got the way he did. Then one must draw some conclusions about what combination of personal characteristics and contextual forces could account for the kind of stories people could get away with telling about him. The final screening of the stories, then, would need to be an analysis of the forces at play in the lives of those telling the stories, and the needs of those narrators, which had to be met by the way the stories were told. That is, the stories need to be seen, in the end, through the lens of the narrators' perspectives, which would have shaped the stories they told.



For example, it is a warrantable claim that the early church probably needed to supernaturalize the story of Jesus and give it a transcendent dimension in order to manage the trauma of his death and of their consequent sense of loss. Thus it would be a legitimate hypothesis that the Easter story might be a product of their need to transcend a dead end of "him who they had hoped would redeem Israel" and, therefore, transcend the potential dead end of their own hopes and lives. Surely we can evaluate how much of the story of Jesus is shaped by those needs, how much is likely to have been shaped by the forces at play in the setting of Jesus' life itself in first-century Galilee, and hence how much of the story must derive from the nature of his person.

So the transcendent aspect of the stories about Jesus does not remove the main requirement of the quest for the real Jesus who lived in Nazareth in the first century. That mandate is still the need to construct a Jesus behind the literary character who has the qualities, given his setting and his narrators' particular needs, that are adequate to carry the stories they told. I do not propose here to identify or describe that historic figure behind the literary character. My task here is to understand the literary character in the early Christian narrative and try to understand how he got that way. Pressing the issue beyond the literary character to the real figure who might stand behind that character in his story is a matter for another and quite different study.

## II. Exposition

### Jesus, the Jew

The literary sources tell us that Jesus, the character in their story, was a Jew who knew himself as the Son of Man. There is little agreement among scholars on what is meant by the title Son of Man. The burden of this paper is to identify who the Jesus in the story thinks he is when he insists that he is the Son of Man. What is it about the kind of Jew he is in the story, that leads him, in the story, to claim this singular identity? What finite number of concrete things did this character in the narrative mean to describe in himself and his role by taking the title Son of Man? Can we describe and explain what he meant and determine where he got the notions about this that he had?<sup>4</sup>

### A Religious Jew in First-Century Galilee

Who did the Jesus in the story think he was? What did he think he was up to? Why did he think of himself and his life in that way? In this study I wish to answer these three questions and perceive clearly Jesus as the literary character in the story. The course I ask you to follow with me is an investigation of a progression of images in history and in the story of Jesus of Nazareth that tell us what it might have meant for a Galilean Jew in the first century to call himself the Son of Man, warding off, as he did, all other identities, such as Son of David, a new Moses, Ezekiel *redivivus*, Son of God, and the traditional notions of Messiah.



Two of the Synoptic Gospels give Jesus precise genealogies. However, Jesus' identity has broader foundations in the gospel stories than the deep Israelite lineage which the genealogies of Matthew and Luke are at pains to establish. The man from Nazareth who traverses the pages of those gospel stories regularly refers to himself by quoting defining prophetic scriptures from the Hebrew Bible. Clearly he saw himself as rooted in the historic Israelite religious traditions. The literature of those traditions, in his judgment, illumined who he was and what it was he was up to. However, as a Galilean Jew, he saw himself standing both within that tradition and, in some sense, over against many aspects of it. This was not unusual for Galileans, who often perceived themselves to be at odds with the Jerusalem religious authorities. However, these very tensions evident in the Jesus story may be the exceptions that prove the rule. For Jesus to take on each of the commandments of the Decalogue, for example, and rework or reinterpret it, was in every case a reaffirmation of the essential spirit of the imperative it articulated. If there is an exception to this, it may be only his address to the commandment regarding keeping the Sabbath.

Moreover, the gospel report that he claimed to supersede Moses, or the Torah, or the Temple, simply affirms that he stood in the tradition of Moses, Torah, and Temple, and perceived himself as moving beyond, in the sense of reinterpreting, those stages of religious perception—just as did Rabbinic Judaism over the six centuries following Jesus' life. So Jesus' Jewishness, in lineage, history, tradition, and spirituality, is clear. The Jesus of the gospel stories knew himself as one of the children of Israel and saw that as defining him and his vocation.

### **Jesus, the Son of Man**

Not only is it true that the literary character, Jesus, called himself the Son of Man, but it is important to note that no one else in the stories called him the Son of Man except Stephen in his mystical reference in Acts 7:56, the author of the mythic reference in the Apocalypse of John 1:13, and the crowd in John 12:34 as they played back to Jesus his use of the term. It is also the case that, if we recognize the Gospel of Mark as the earliest of the four in the New Testament and hence the least elaborated by later editorial influences, the Jesus of the gospel story permitted no one to call him anything but Son of Man (Mark 8:27–33 and John 1:47–51, and 4). Moreover, it is of great import that as soon as the gospel stories were written and before the middle of the second century, the Christian community permanently and thoroughly eliminated the use of the title Son of Man in those meanings of it with which the character of Jesus is identified.

### **The Scholarly Landscape**

In the Synoptic Gospels there are 69 Son of Man sayings: 14 in Mark, 29 in Matthew, and 26 in Luke. John has 14. Rudolph Bultmann pointed out that these all fall

into three categories.<sup>5</sup> First, there are those that represent the Son of Man as a man, called to be a prophet preaching the impending advent of the kingdom of God on earth. Second, there are those that represent the Son of Man as suffering for proclaiming the kingdom, but exalted by God for it. Third, there are those that represent the Son of Man as coming as the eschatological judge on the clouds of heaven with the holy angels in the glory of God the Father.<sup>6</sup> Bultmann thought that only the third category had any chance of actually going back to the real historic figure of Jesus of Nazareth. He was sure the others were all crafted by the post-Easter church as a way of coming to terms with the tragic trauma of Jesus' death. The general line of argument is that the church, seeing its continuation after that terminal tragedy as proof that the Spirit was alive and well in their community, discerned that Jesus' death was not the end of their story and thus not the end of his story, and accordingly crafted the gospel story to provide an account of that fact—thus the resurrection and ascension narratives.

The title Son of Man, however, is not likely to have been created by the early church, nor is its use in the gospels likely to have arisen within the post-Easter congregations, as a way to understand the meaning of Jesus' life and death. The early church lacked appreciation of the title and eliminated it as quickly as it could. It came from somewhere else, and the gospel authors were compelled to include it in the writing of their gospels despite their apparent discomfort with the title. They had no use for it and apparently could hardly stand it. They could hardly wait to get rid of it. Nonetheless, they understood that everybody knew that Jesus called himself the Son of Man, and there was no way around depicting that fact in the narratives if they were to be believable. Why did this character, Jesus, do that, where did he get the term, and what did he mean by it? What is its function in the story?

### Relevant Judaic Traditions

The title Son of Man seems to have been known in Judaic tradition by the time of Jesus and thus could be used as a stock-in-trade concept available to Mark and the other crafters of the story in which Jesus is the main character. It had identifiable roots and meanings in that tradition. The first prominent appearance of the title is in the prophecy of Ezekiel, where it is used ninety-three times. Each time the expression is a formula with which God addresses Ezekiel. Each time God calls him to prophesy the impending arrival of divine intervention in history and proclaim the advent of God's kingdom on earth. The second prominent appearance is in Dan 7–9 in which "one like the Son of Man" (7:13) is exalted to heavenly status, with power and dominion over the earth.<sup>7</sup> This power and dominion is delegated to and exercised by the Son of Man's proxies on earth, who are called "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High" (7:27). The third significant occurrence of the title is in *First Enoch* 37–71, an apocalyptic and eschatological section of that prophecy, in which the dramatic advent of the exalted Son of Man is promised, as the judge of the earth at the end of time. In *First Enoch* a human being, namely Enoch himself, is desig-



nated as the Son of Man, exalted to heavenly status, and given his eschatological role. The fourth prominent appearance of a figure with the characteristics Jesus associates with the title Son of Man is in the *Thanksgiving Hymns* and the *War Scroll* from Qumran. In those Dead Sea scrolls the Royal Messiah is described as suffering and dying.

In the Jesus story of the Synoptic Gospels these images of the Son of Man-Messiah appear as progressive stages in Jesus' self-concept. This is also true in the Gospel of John except that in the end, the story as John tells it has Jesus adding a fifth prominent use or construct for the title and for Jesus' identity and vocation. In John's second-century narrative, Jesus is depicted as dissociating himself as Son of Man from the role of eschatological judge. In John's Gospel, Son of Man comes to mean savior (3:14-18). It is in the context of these relevant Judaic pre-gospel traditions of a progression of Son of Man images that the meaning and use of the term Son of Man as it is placed in the mouth of Jesus, the Jew, must be sought. Only then can we discern what the self-concept of this literary character is intended by his story to be.

### **The Progression of Images, I: Ezekiel Redivivus**

Recently, Marvin A. Sweeney<sup>8</sup> and, before him, Margaret S. Odell<sup>9</sup> have given us real assistance here. Odell argued persuasively that the key figure in the drama of the book of Ezekiel in the Hebrew Bible is both priest and prophet and that the story of his call to be a prophet is developed on the framework of the ritual of ordination of priests in Lev 8-9. She emphasized that this fact illustrates that in Ezekiel's life and vocation his call represents a transition in his identity, from the primary vocation of priest to the primary vocation of prophet, though in gaining the latter he does not lose the former. His prophetic role is a new type of unfolding of his priesthood in a setting in which the temple and holy city are defiled and the authentic priestly rituals can no longer be carried out there.

In *Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile*, Sweeney builds upon Odell's argument. He outlines the correspondence in categories of ritual elements in the Levitical ordination of priests and in the story of Ezekiel's prophetic call. Sweeney points out that the entire book of Ezekiel is a progression of the ritual elements of Levitical ordination (Lev 8-9). Careful comparison demonstrates that the Jesus story in the gospels contains these same ordination-ritual elements, giving strong indication that at one level those telling the story in which Jesus is the main character crafted the story in terms of Jesus' Ezekiel-like priestly ordination. In the book of Ezekiel this ordination process leads to the priest, addressed by God as the Son of Man, being called and ordained as a prophet of the coming kingdom of God. The ritual factors in Levitical ordination of priests, the progressive phases in Ezekiel's development as prophet, and their counterparts in the Jesus story are as follows:



*Factor One: Ordination at Age Thirty*

Levitical priestly ordinands are initiated into the vocation at age thirty and continue for a twenty-year career, retiring at age fifty (Num 4:3, 23, 30; see also Num 8:23–25). Ezekiel began his career at age thirty, and his book closes the odyssey when he is age fifty (Ezek 1:1). Jesus' ministry began at approximately age thirty, in keeping with the prescription for Levitical priests and with the precedent in Ezekiel, the first notable Son of Man in Judaic tradition.

*Factor Two: Ingesting the Divine Gift*

Levitical priestly ordinands ate the ram of ordination (Lev 8:31). Ezekiel ate the scroll given him by Yahweh (Ezek 2:8–3:3). That is, both digest the sacred gift from God, thereby presumably being equipped for service, and thereby receiving the required divine illumination. It is not obvious that Jesus' official call status began with ingesting and digesting a sacred gift from God which equipped him for service. However, two aspects of the biblical record are suggestive and noteworthy here. First, Mark says that immediately after his baptism Jesus was driven into the wilderness where, for forty days, he was deprived of sustenance except for that which "the angels ministered to him." The forty days were the transforming experience which led to Jesus' illumination regarding his call, as was the digestion of the scroll for Ezekiel, and the ram for the Levitical priest candidates. Was the angelic ministrations to Jesus in the wilderness the counterpart of the eating of the sacred gift by the priestly ordinands and by Ezekiel (3:1–3)?

Second, the author of the Apocalypse of John noticed this paradigmatic correspondence between Jesus as the Son of Man of the gospels and Ezekiel as the Son of Man who ingests the divine gift of illumination, the scroll, for in the Johannine Apocalypse the surrogate or amanuensis (1:19) of the one like the Son of Man (1:13) eats the scroll proffered by the angel (10:8–11), and the eating and its aftertaste are described in language which is exactly like that in Ezekiel. Moreover, that same surrogate for the Son of Man in the Apocalypse is then instructed to measure the holy city and temple (Rev 11), as in Ezekiel (8–11, 40–48), in preparation for the renewed creation (new heaven and earth [Rev 21:1]), a new holy city (the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God [Rev 21:2]), and a new temple (its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb [Rev 21:22]). Clearly the allusion to Ezekiel and the Levitical paradigm is too striking to ignore.

*Factor Three: Spiritual Retreat*

Levitical priestly ordinands sat in seclusion for seven days (Lev 8:33). Ezekiel sat in silence among his people for seven days (Ezek 3:15). Seven is the first symbolic number to appear in the Hebrew Bible, being the framework of creation. The primary symbolic time frame in the Jesus story is the forty days of silence or seclusion in the wilderness, which initiated Jesus' career as the Son of Man. Jesus' symbolic time is not seven days but

corresponds, instead, to the second most prominent paradigmatic time symbol in the Hebrew Bible, namely the number forty. Moreover, there is undoubtedly a conscious relationship between Jesus' forty days in the wilderness receiving the heavenly illumination, and Moses' forty days on Sinai in the wilderness receiving the Torah, to say nothing of the forty years of Moses' preparation in the wilderness before his commission to lead the Exodus, and the forty years of Israelite wilderness wandering in preparation for their vocation as the unique and paradigmatic people of the covenant in the promised land. The shift from seven to forty cannot be accidental or insignificant, within the structure of the paradigm, in view of the impending declaration by Jesus that as Son of Man he is greater than the Torah, Jonah, and Solomon (Matt 12), nor does it violate the Levitical model since the outcome is a corresponding symbolic sacred time of preparation for vocation.

#### *Factor Four: Atoning for the Sins of the Multitude*

Levitical priestly ordinands make atonement for the guilt of the people (Lev 9:1–21). Ezekiel bears the guilt of the people although he does not make a formal sacrificial atonement (Ezek 4:4–8). Both Ezekiel and Levitical priest candidates symbolically bear the guilt of the people and make symbolic sacrificial atonement in order to purify the people, temple, land, and creation, anticipating their renewal by God. So Jesus, as Son of Man, is represented in the gospels as destined to be sacrificed “for the sins of many.” Frequent references are made in the gospels to the suffering, death, and exaltation of the Son of Man. This is particularly evident in the references to Jesus, as Son of Man, being lifted up, “as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness” (John 3:14).

These references are clearly not intended as references to his crucifixion but rather to the fact that he is, as Son of Man, the symbolic agent of the healing of the people, as was Moses' brass serpent, and as was Ezekiel. Sweeney tells us, as I noted above, that Ezekiel is the agent of both the guilt and the atonement of Israel, insofar as he “portrays the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as a sacrifice that is designed to purify Jerusalem, the nation of Israel, and creation at large.” This same symbolic purification is undoubtedly what Jesus intended in the “cleansing of the temple” (Matt 21). Donald Capps, Paula Fredriksen, and others refer to Jesus' aggression in the temple as a symbolic destruction of the temple, as a mode of its purification, and as a purification of the world.

#### *Factor Five: The Theophany*

Levitical priestly ordinands were admitted to the sanctuary to see the glory of Yahweh (Lev 9:23). Ezekiel saw the glory of Yahweh as God prepared the destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (Ezek 8–11). Ezekiel and the priest candidates experience a theophany when they are admitted to the sanctuary of the temple. They see the *Kabod*. Jesus' calling to ministry starts with such a theophany. “In those days Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee and was baptized by John in the Jordan. Immediately coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven: ‘Thou art my beloved Son; with thee I am well pleased’” (Mark 1:9–11).



*Factor Six: Proclaiming the Kingdom of God*

In Ezekiel's time, with temple, holy city, and the land defiled by foreign invasion and the consequent violation of the sacred places, Ezekiel lived in a foreign place without access to the site of priestly service. He was reduced to living his life in the kind of work and rituals that made *him* impure as well. He ate ordinary food, dressed in ordinary ways, carried out ordinary forms of hygiene, and so was called Son of Man each time God addressed him. The term can mean nothing else than "ordinary mortal." God called him as an ordinary mortal, despite his priestly identity and heritage, and commissioned him as a prophet to proclaim the advent of God's rule, his kingdom. Ezekiel, as son of Adam (human being), must live in an ordinary way in the ordinary world, defiled and impure, waiting for the renewal of the temple, city, land, and people, when God arrives, intervenes, and brings in his reign.

Ezekiel's prophetic role, calling for the renewal of God's domain and people, and for God's reign, fulfills his priestly role as the agent of atonement and redemption. Jesus, likewise, as Son of Adam/Man, perceives himself called to the prophetic role of proclaiming the advent of the kingdom of God. The story places Jesus in the same role and mode as Ezekiel, commissioned to bring in God's kingdom, and fulfilling his task as agent of the world's renewal and redemption.

*Factor Seven: Predicting Destruction of the Holy Places*

In reference to factor four above, although Ezekiel did not offer a sacrifice of atonement for the people, despite the fact that this is an important factor in the ritual of the priestly ordinands, Sweeney points out that Ezekiel does, indeed,

offer a sacrifice as atonement in so far as he portrays the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple as a sacrifice that is designed to purify Jerusalem, the nation of Israel, and creation at large. . . . This results not only in a transformation of Ezekiel's role as both priest and prophet but in a transformation of all creation insofar as the Jerusalem Temple, the holy center of creation, is destroyed and replaced with a new Temple that signals the beginning of a new creation in the aftermath of the Babylonian exile.<sup>10</sup>

While Ezekiel predicts the destruction of the city and temple when God intervenes for the purification of the temple, city, land, and people, Jesus predicts the destruction of the city and temple and then carries out a symbolic purifying destruction of the temple and its ritual. Moreover, he does this with the conscious awareness that he is thereby precipitating the final conflict with the religious authorities that will fulfill his apocalyptic vision of the suffering, dying, and exalted Son of Man. Don Capps has recently teased out the details of this psychodynamic action.<sup>11</sup> Jesus clearly envisioned that this symbolic act of



cleansing the temple and thus precipitating his own death would lead to the advent of the divine rule on earth. He promised that it would come in the first generation and that it would be attended by the appearance of the Son of Man reentering the drama on earth by appearing on the clouds of heaven with all the holy angels in the glory of his father, as eschatological judge (Synoptic Gospels) or as savior (John).

So we have here the depiction of a priestly prophet, whose career can be described in terms of these seven historic factors. This figure is known as and answers to the title Son of Man. It cannot be accidental that the key turning points in Jesus' career correspond precisely to the Levitical paradigm of ordination that shaped Ezekiel's call to the identity and role of Son of Man. The authors of the Jesus story clearly had Ezekiel and the Levitical paradigm in mind. Therefore, it is obvious that one clear Judaic tradition written into the Jesus character in the gospels is that of the Son of Man image in Ezekiel, a human prophet proclaiming that God's kingdom is in the process of breaking in upon this mundane world.

It is surprising that no one has developed this clear correlation between the Son of Man model in the gospel narratives, the model in Ezekiel, and the Levitical ordination ritual. Obviously, the first identifiable meaning of Son of Man that the Jesus story intends to associate with the literary character of Jesus is that of a human priest/prophet like Ezekiel, who is called to proclaim the impending advent of the kingdom of God.

However, we have a problem here. Where did the notion come from, which the gospels associate with Jesus, that having been called as an Ezekiel-type human prophet to proclaim the reign of God on earth, Jesus, as the Son of Man, would move on to become the suffering and dying Messiah who would eventually find his deliverance and triumphal destiny as an exalted heavenly figure? Where did he acquire the notion that he would actually become the redeeming sacrifice (Mark 8:31) rather than, as Ezekiel had done, symbolically narrate the purifying atonement in the form of the story of the impending destruction of the temple and the city? Why do the gospels portray him as going further and talking about a second, third, and fourth phase of the Son of Man odyssey, namely suffering, dying at the hands of the gentiles, being exalted of God, and returning as the eschatological judge? That is certainly not the Son of Man in Ezekiel. It is the Messiah of a later Judaic tradition, namely that of the suffering Messiah of Qumran, combined with the Son of Man of Dan 7-9 and of *1 En.* 37-71.

### **The Progression of Images, II: The Suffering Messiah of Qumran**

To the great astonishment of some scholars, there is no son of man at Qumran. That is, the title Son of Man is not employed in the rich literature of the Qumran Essene sect, found in the caves near the Dead Sea. However, some references in the Dead Sea Scrolls seem to offer evidence of a figure and a messianic concept notably similar to Son of Man sayings in the gospels. This suggests that those Dead Sea scrolls, which are dated

between 400 B.C.E. and 50 B.C.E., may well have raised messianic images in the minds of the gospel writers, and even of Jesus himself, which they imported into their concept of the Son of Man with which Jesus, the literary character, was identified in the literary drama.

### *The Rule of the Qumran Community and the Synoptic Son of Man*

Heinz E. Tödt found, in the *Rule of the Community* (*Serekh ha-Yahad*),<sup>12</sup> IV, 25 and IX, 11, references to the actions of a messianic figure like the one in the Son of Man sayings of Matt 19:28 and Mark 14:61–62.<sup>13</sup> Tödt simply noted that the only setting in the gospels in which the same notion of a messianic human moving toward an apotheosis as eschatological judge arises is in the Son of Man sayings. Tödt points out that in Mark 14:61–62 the titles Son of Man and Messiah are joined. Caiaphas asked Jesus, “Are you the Messiah, the Son of the Blessed?” Jesus’ reply is direct: “I am; and you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.” At Qumran and in Mark the messianic man is divinely appointed to function as judge, in the sense of separating the righteous from the condemned unrighteous in the eschaton.

The Qumran reference with which Tödt joins this Markan narrative concerns the hope for the endurance of the righteous, “until the prophet comes, and the Messiahs of Aaron and Israel.”<sup>14</sup> Tödt claims that this hope for multiple messiahs is refined by Jesus’ day into a unified messianic hope. In the form of the Enochic Essenism that became the Jesus Movement, this unified hope centered in the messianic Son of Man, as it had in the Royal Messiah at Qumran. In the literary drama of the gospels, Jesus announces that this Son of Man is the figure who is to suffer at the hands of evil men and die, in direct correspondence with the Qumran expectation regarding the Messiah. Thus Tödt sees a relationship of concepts between the Royal Messiah of Qumran and the Jesus character of the gospel narratives. Both are suffering and dying Messiahs. The Qumran Community does not refer to this figure as the Son of Man, but clearly has in mind the same messianic figure as the one for which the Jesus Movement employed that title, Son of Man, claiming that it came from Jesus himself.

### *The War Scroll and the Synoptic Son of Man*

George W. E. Nickelsburg develops at length the relationship between Dan 7 and the Parables of Enoch, with particular emphasis upon the judicial role of the messianic figure.<sup>15</sup> While he distinguishes between the judicial role of Michael in Dan 10 and 12 and the nonjudicial role of the one like a Son of Man in Dan 7, he nonetheless points out that “[t]he heavenly enthronement of the one like a Son of Man will involve Israel’s earthly supremacy over all the nations.” This supremacy is reminiscent of the messianic destiny of Israel in Isa 61. Nickelsburg points out that it is this supremacy of the messianic figure or people which one finds in 1QM XVII, 8. Here we read that God will exalt “the dominion of Israel over all flesh.”



In Dan 7 the one like the Son of Man is exalted to heavenly enthronement while both he and his minions on earth, "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High," are exalted over all kingdoms and powers on earth. Thus the one like the Son of Man becomes the heavenly epitome of the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High who are on earth, or they become the earthly epitome of the exalted and heavenly Son of Man. In *1 En.* 69:26-29 the Son of Man combines the role of enthronement and judgment, as does the Son of Man in the Synoptic Gospels. The Enochic scene is straightforward. The hosts of heaven witness the exaltation and judgment carried out by the Son of Man. Nickelsburg invites us to hear clearly the strains of the overture played in the Parables of Enoch, which will become the theme of the sonata developed in the gospels:

And there was great joy amongst them,  
 And they blessed and glorified and extolled,  
 Because the name of that Son of Man had been revealed to them  
 And he sat on the throne of his glory,  
 And the command of the judgment was given unto the Son of Man  
 And he caused the sinners to pass away and be destroyed from off the  
     face of the earth,  
 (or, he shall never pass away or perish from the face of the earth)  
 And those who have led the world astray  
 Shall be bound with chains,  
 And their ruinous assembly shall be imprisoned  
 And their works shall vanish from the face of the earth.  
 And from henceforth there shall be nothing corruptible  
 For that Son of Man has appeared,  
 And has seated himself on the throne of his glory,  
 And all evil shall pass away from before his face,  
 And the word of that Son of Man shall go forth. . . .

Nickelsburg clearly intimates in his superb article the mutuality of language and concept of this great variety of literatures of Second Temple Judaism associated with the Son of Man as exalted heavenly figure and eschatological judge. One can hardly miss the correlative, if not the literarily genealogical, relationship between these documents. The implication of Nickelsburg's work is that Tödt's reference to the messianic expectation and eschatological judgment at Qumran in the *Rule of the Community* is a correlate of the Son of Man ideology in the Parables of Enoch. Thus, while the Dead Sea Scrolls do not name or title a Son of Man, they present the same messianic theology of eschatological judgment which is presented more concretely in the "missing Similitudes," where it is given the name, title, and messianic character of the Son of Man. Moreover, it is precisely this figure who is the Son of Man in *1 En.* 37-71 and the messianic Suffering Servant-Son of Man in the Jesus story, that is the Suffering Servant-Royal Messiah at Qumran.



*The Son of Man and the Suffering Servant at Qumran*

More recently, Israel Knohl<sup>16</sup> has described, at considerably greater length than Tödt and Nickelsburg, his argument for a significant messianic figure(s) in the Dead Sea Scrolls associated in nature and role with eschatological judgment. Knohl, however, is at pains to draw out the implication of his citations from the scrolls even further in relationship to the nature and role of the Son of Man in the gospel narratives. Knohl finds a surprising Suffering Servant–Messiah who appears in the text of two or three Dead Sea scrolls, and is attested by four or five separate copies.<sup>17</sup> Unfortunately, these scrolls are in damaged condition, though the entire manuscript seems nonetheless to be preserved in various parts. If warranted, Knohl's claim seems even more significant than that of Tödt, and somewhat more effectively confirmed by the textual evidence.

Knohl cites 4QH<sup>c</sup> (4Q431), 4QH<sup>a</sup> (4Q427) fragment 7, 1QH<sup>a</sup> column XXVI, and 4Q491 fragment 11, column I. As the H indicates in the first three references, these are all from the *Hodayot*; that is, they are hymns from the *Thanksgiving Scroll* series. These all belong to the first version of the hymns. The fourth citation is 4Q491 (4QMa) from the *War Scroll* and is a second version of the hymns.<sup>18</sup> The main evidence for the first version is found in two rather substantial fragments of 4QH<sup>c</sup>. The relevant text in the first fragment speaks of the messianic figure as beloved of the king who, from the context, seems clearly to be God. This messianic figure, whom God loves, is described as dwelling among the holy ones, though rejected by humanity. The first term, regarding his exaltation by the king, certainly rings with the sounds of Pss 2, 8, and 110; the second, depicting heavenly transcendence, echoes the strains of Dan 7–9; and the third, introducing suffering and rejection, seems reminiscent of Isa 53. If these references seem a bit tenuous, they are confirmed by the second fragment, which speaks of the messianic figure being despised and enduring evil.

The fragmentary nature of 4QH<sup>c</sup> is, of course, troublesome. However, we are fortunate to be able to flesh out virtually the entire document by comparative analysis of all other texts in version one, where "parallel expressions are sometimes preserved in a more complete form."<sup>19</sup> Moreover, parallels also exist in version two for most of the relevant citations. For example, 1QH<sup>a</sup> speaks of the messianic figure expressing "gentleness to the poor" but being "oppressed" (fragment 16, column III). Similar confirmation is evident for the expressions of divine exaltation of the messianic figure, his assignment to dwell with the angels and the holy ones, his glory, and his role as judge. Knohl reconstructs this section of the first version of the first hymn as follows:

I shall be reckoned with the angels, my dwelling is in the holy council.  
 Who . . . has been despised like me and who has been rejected of men like me?  
 And who compares to me in enduring evil?  
 No teaching compares to my teaching  
 For I sit . . . in heaven.  
 Who is like me among the angels?  
 Who would cut off my words?

And who could measure the flow of my lips?  
 Who can associate with me, thus compare with my judgment?  
 I am the beloved of the king, a companion of the holy ones . . .  
 And to my glory none can compare. . . .<sup>20</sup>

The second version of Hymn 1 has very similar language, as one would expect. Here again we have the messianic figure on an eternal heavenly throne of power. Three times over he is declared to be assigned to the angelic council. None can compare with his glory except the sons of the king. No one has been so exalted. He sits in heaven and none can accompany him to this unique majestic place. The holy council is his dwelling place. He has been despised, has borne incomparable afflictions, has endured incomparable evil—and he has been glorified. No one is like him, no teaching like his teaching. No one can associate with him or compare with his exercise of judgment.

Hymn 2, version 1, is preserved in 4QH<sup>a</sup> 7 I, 13–23, and II, 1–14, but this hymn is an exaltation of God and a celebration of his redemptive exaltation of redeemed humans. “Proclaim and say: Great is God who acts wonderfully, for he casts down the haughty spirit so that there is no remnant and lifts up the poor from the dust to the eternal height and to the clouds he magnifies him in stature, and he is with the heavenly beings in the assembly of the community.”<sup>21</sup> The second version of Hymn 2 is preserved in a mere fragment (11 I, 13–16) of 4Q491 but refers to the exaltation of God’s Messiah to the heavenly realm with the angels, and to his being accorded heavenly power. Of course, as suggested above, it is difficult to miss the specific correspondence between the language of suffering, exaltation, and judgment associated with the Messiah in these messianic hymns and the language of the Son of Man logia of the Synoptic Gospels. Indeed, references to this messianic figure fit all three of Bultmann’s categories of Son of Man logia, as discussed below, but Knohl is particularly interested in category two, the suffering Messiah. It is also obvious how dependent both literary sources, Knohl’s Qumran references and the gospel logia, are upon Pss 8:4–6 and 110:1, Isa 53:1–12, Dan 7:13–14 and 26–27, and *1 En.* 37–71 (particularly 69). The latter is surprising, since *1 En.* 37–71, as an identifiable text, seems to be totally absent from the Qumran library, as noted above.

What is very suggestive about the associations made in this discussion thus far is the degree to which the messianic figure referred to in Daniel, in the Similitudes (Parables) of Enoch, and in the gospels of the New Testament is like the Messiah of Qumran (the *Hodayot*, *War Scroll*, and *Rule of the Community*), though at Qumran he is never accorded the title of Son of Man. Thus the important point here lies in the relationship between that evidence which strongly relates the suffering messianic figure at Qumran with the similar suffering messianic figure of the Synoptic Gospels known as the Son of Man, though the community of Qumran did not employ that title.

In this regard two issues are of importance. First, there is, as we have already noted, a remarkable correspondence of language, concept, and content between the Suffering Servant passages from Qumran, to which Knohl calls our attention, and the



language of the Son of Man logia in the gospels, which depict the suffering and dying Messiah. Second, there is a notable correspondence between the ultimate heavenly exaltation and enthronement as judge of this figure who appears on earth as the Suffering Servant in the passages at Qumran and the comparable Son of Man logia in the canonical gospels. We apparently have a Suffering Servant-Messiah in the *Hodayot* and the *War Scroll* at Qumran, who is set in the context of the messianic figure of the *Rule of the Community* and who is the impending apocalyptic eschatological judge. The comparative chronology of the two sets of texts, Qumran narrative (150 B.C.E.–50 C.E.) and gospel logia (80–100 C.E.), is also most interesting, particularly if viewed in the framework developed by Gabriele Boccaccini in his study of the relationship between sectarian and extra-sectarian Essenism.<sup>22</sup>

### *Who Is the Suffering Messiah at Qumran?*

With regard to the question of who the messianic figure in the Qumran hymns might be, J. J. Collins argues that the identity of the speaker, who refers to himself repeatedly in these hymns, is not the Teacher of Righteousness nor a composite figure representing the righteous community, or, to use Daniel's term, "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High," but an individual author whose identity until now has remained a mystery.<sup>23</sup> Knohl argues on the basis of a conjunction of references in the *Oracle of Hystaspes*, the book of Revelation, the *Assumption of Moses*, and Roman history that the two messianic leaders killed in the streets of Jerusalem in 4 B.C.E. by the Romans under Caesar Augustus were the Royal and the Priestly Messiahs for which the Qumran Community had been looking, and that one of these was the speaker in the messianic hymns. Since the speaker refers to being exalted to a throne, Knohl concludes it was the Royal Messiah who gave us the hymns:

As the two messianic leaders were killed in 4 BCE, they surely were active in the period previous to that year—that is, during the reign of King Herod (37–4 BCE). . . . [A]ll four copies of the messianic hymns were written precisely at that period. One can, therefore, assume that one of the two Messiahs killed in 4 BCE was the hero of the messianic hymns from Qumran. . . . The hero of the hymns did not have any priestly attributes; on the other hand, he spoke of sitting on a "throne of power" and mentioned a crown. From this we may deduce he was the royal Messiah.<sup>24</sup>

The historical record indicates that by order of the authorities, the two slain religious figures were left unburied in the city streets for three days, after which they disappeared, leading their disciples to believe that they had risen to life and ascended to heaven, as the hero in the hymns promised. As the messianic figure in the hymns had appropriated to himself the character and role of the Suffering Servant of Isa 53:4–8, so also had he appropriated to himself the exaltation of Isa 52:13: "Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high." At the time of the murder of the mes-

sianic figures, his disciples took the abusive neglect of his body in the streets as a reason to appropriate to him also Isa 53:9 and 12: "They made his grave with the wicked . . . he was numbered with the transgressors."<sup>25</sup> It was a short leap, in the minds of the disciples of the Qumran Messiahs, from this Isaianic notion to fashioning an association between the disappearance of the corpse and resurrection and ascension to the heavenly enthronement, which the author of the hymns had anticipated and promised.

Knohl sees the outcome of this historic event in Roman history to have been of great significance and relevance to the Qumran Community and its literature:

Thus after the Messiah's death his believers created a "catastrophic" ideology. The rejection of the Messiah, his humiliation, and his death were thought to have been foretold in the Scriptures and to be necessary stages in the process of redemption. The disciples of the Qumran Messiahs believed that the humiliated and pierced Messiah had been resurrected after three days and that he was due to reappear on earth as redeemer, victor, and judge.

Daniel prophesied that the fourth beast would be destroyed and the kingdom would be given to the "son of man," whom Daniel described as sitting on a heavenly throne and as coming in the clouds of heaven.

The disciples and followers of the Qumranic Messiah believed that he had been resurrected after three days and had risen to heaven in a cloud. He now sat in heaven as he had described himself in his vision—on a "throne of power in the angelic council." Eventually he would return, descending from above with the clouds of heaven, surrounded by angels. The time would then have come for the overthrow of the fourth beast—Rome—and *the Messiah would thus fulfill Daniel's vision of the "son of man."*<sup>26</sup> (Emphasis added)

Knohl points out that this is the first time in Israelite history that the notion of catastrophic messianism is introduced in which "the humiliation, rejection, and death of the Messiah were regarded as an inseparable part of the redemptive process" and of his inevitable exaltation, enthronement, and ultimate apotheosis as divine judge.<sup>27</sup>

*Why Is the Suffering Servant and Messianic Judge  
Not the Son of Man at Qumran?*

The enigma in all of this lies in one question: If the Qumran Community had a model of the suffering and dying Messiah which lay close in time, concept, and geography or socio-political setting to the Son of Man logia of the gospels; if that community also depended heavily upon the Enochic tradition, as did the Jesus Movement; if the Son of Man figure was so prominent under that name in the Enochic tradition which both of these communities shared; and if the Qumran expectations were shaped by the Daniel narrative about heavenly exaltation of the Son of Man in a way similar to the shaping of the expectations



of the Jesus Movement, why do the apparently heretical Qumran texts not employ the Enochic term, Son of Man, to refer to their messianic eschatological judge, or to their suffering, dying, exalted, and enthroned Messiah, in the manner in which the Synoptic Gospels refer to him? Is it possible, even likely, that the gospel writers identified Jesus with the Qumran model of the suffering, dying, and exalted Messiah, and had good reason to integrate these characteristics into their model of Jesus' self-concept as Son of Man?

In his erudite and incisive chapter titled "The Schism between Qumran and Enochic Judaism," Gabriele Boccaccini emphasizes that there are two types of documents in the Dead Sea Scrolls: those which were common to Essenes both within and outside of Qumran and those which were unique to Qumran.<sup>28</sup> The former are pre-sectarian or extra-sectarian and remained normative for the urban Essenes, while the latter are sectarian in character and chronology, and exclusive to Qumran. Thus, prior to the cloistering of the Qumran Essenes, the *Halakic Letter*, *Dream Visions*, *Jubilees*, the *Temple Scroll*, the *Proto-Epistle of Enoch*, and the *Damascus Document* (CD) were theologically determinative in all Essene communities and thought. CD states that God calls his righteous people to separate themselves from the world and declares, surprisingly, that God has not elected all of Israel, but only a remnant, to salvation.

However, like the other documents listed, CD provides for a certain degree of free will exercised by humans and sub-divine heavenly beings. Thus the strict supralapsarian determinism of the subsequent sectarian documents at Qumran was not standard in Essenism before and outside of Qumran. That Qumranic doctrine of determinism, Boccaccini argues, made no room for any freedom of will on the part of humans, or of the "fallen angels," who were seen as the source of evil in the world. Moreover, the Parables of Enoch, which elaborate the Danielic tradition of the exalted Son of Man, since it was not present at Qumran, must have been an addition to the Essene literature outside of Qumran, namely, among the urban Essenes, produced after the cloistering of the sectarian community of Qumran. This is a critical fact in the argument because the Parables (Similitudes) clearly speak against the Qumranic notion of supralapsarian determinism, as do other facets of *First Enoch*:

The Epistle of Enoch does not simply lack specific Qumranic elements, . . . it has specific anti-Qumranic elements. The most obvious is I En 98:4. The passage explicitly condemns those who state that since human beings are victims of a corrupted universe, they are not responsible for the sins they commit, and they blame others (God or the evil angels) for having exported "sin" into the world. "I have sworn unto you, sinners: In the same manner that a mountain has never turned into a servant, nor shall a hill (ever) become a maidservant or a woman; likewise, neither has sin been exported into the world. It is the people who have themselves invented it. And those who commit it shall come under a great curse" (98:4).<sup>29</sup>

In the sectarian documents unique to Qumran, evil is transcendent and supralapsarian in both source and remedy: a state of affairs preset by God from the beginning by election of some to righteousness and others to damnation. In the urban Essene movement, salvation from evil is accomplished by a divine salvific intervention, for which a Son of Man like the one in Dan 7:13ff. and in *1 En.* 37–39 and 70–71 would be an adequate resource, when he descends as judge to separate the righteous from the unrighteous. Boccaccini points out that the cosmic tragedy, induced by fallen angels (Sons of God who cavorted with the daughters of men), requires more than a human or angelic savior, since such a judge or redeemer, in order to subdue the evil powers, must have power superior to that of those angels who brought evil into the world. The exaltation of the Son of Man to the heavenly enthronement, in the Enochic tradition outside Qumran, places the Son of Man above the angels in power and glory. Thus, in extra-Qumran Enochic literature, the Son of Man is empowered by God to bring the ultimate resolution to life, history, and evil, at his advent as eschatological judge. The Parables of Enoch were part of the urban Essene theological literature.

The most distinctive quality of this extra-Qumranic Essene model, however, lies in the fact that humans can contribute to their legitimate inclusion in the community of the elect by willfully conducting their lives as the righteous ones, "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High." There is no possibility of such human action in will or deed at Qumran. All is preset from eternity. Among the Essenes outside Qumran there is a distinction made, Boccaccini declares, between the evil in the world that has a transcendent source, namely the fallen angels, and human sin, which is life willfully lived in complicity with this cosmic evil. One can willfully choose a righteous life: "the boundaries between the chosen and the wicked remain permeable. The door to salvation, which the Damascus Document kept open only for a limited period of time and which the sectarian documents barred from the beginning for those who have not been chosen by God, will be open until the very last moment," according to the Essenes outside Qumran.<sup>30</sup>

In the Qumranic model God has preset the destiny of the elect and the reprobate. There is no room for one's volitional choice to live in complicity with evil or in identification with the righteousness of God and the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High. One has only one's preset destiny. To discern whether one's destiny is that of the elect or damned, one is invited to separate himself from the world and undertake to live the life of righteousness in the cloistered community. If a person discovers that living the community's discipline is possible for him, he can know that he is one of God's elect. If he cannot live by that discipline, he has no recourse but to accept his supralapsarian reprobate status in the eternal scheme of things. Both the elect and the damned are assigned their destiny to the glory of God. The judgment of God at the end of history will separate the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High from the unrighteous, exterminating the latter and gathering the former into the kingdom of God. Thus there is no place at Qumran for a Son of Man, as redemptive messianic figure or as messianic eschatological judge. God is the only judge, and he made the final judgment by a supralapsarian act at the time that he decided to



create the world and humanity in it. Both salvation and judgment, therefore, are already past. They will not come at the end of time. There is no role for the Son of Man at Qumran:

The Qumran community did not become less apocalyptic, if we consider its roots and worldview; but it certainly became less Enochic the further it parted from the parallel development of mainstream Enochic Judaism since the first century BCE. Therefore, the decreasing influence of Enochic literature on the sectarian texts is by no means surprising; it is the logical consequence of the schism between Qumran and Enochic Judaism.<sup>31</sup>

### *Why Then the Suffering Messiah at Qumran?*

Knohl offers an intriguing rationale in his "Sherlock Holmes"-style narrative. He asserts that the messianic figure who produced the messianic hymns that were found among the scrolls at Qumran, to which we have referred above, was promoting a notion at Qumran that ran counter to the orthodox doctrine of the community. His idea of a suffering messianic figure who would facilitate the enhancement and endurance of the community of the righteous was an attempt to recover something of the pre-sectarian quality of historic Enochic doctrine while associating the messianic figure with Pss 2, 8, and 110, on the one hand, and Dan 7 and Isa 53, on the other.

His doctrine was unconventional and unacceptable at Qumran, causing the condition of the edition of his manuscripts of the hymns as we have them. Knohl claims that normal aging, decay, or environmental conditions were not the cause of these manuscripts' being in fragments when they were discovered in the clay jars. Other manuscripts were discovered in fragments in the caves at Qumran because their clay containers had been menaced, damaged, or destroyed. The main manuscript of this edition of the hymns was found in its jar, undisturbed, but carefully and intentionally torn into rather large pieces and then stored in the container.<sup>32</sup> Knohl judges that this tells us an important story, namely, that this edition of the manuscripts was suppressed at Qumran, that it consequently was torn into pieces with rather careful intentionality, but that the pieces were preserved by one of the heretical author's devotees who carefully and surreptitiously placed them in the clay jars and in the caves, along with the rest of the library. This scenario, despite its speculative quality, is possible. Whether one can declare that it is probable requires further evidence confirming that there was the type of heretical movement at Qumran that Knohl proposes as the key to his argument.

If this speculative theory is true, in a suppressed text of the Dead Sea Scrolls library three key factors conspire to form a single historical datum that is eminently relevant to Jesus' self-concept, as he is fashioned into the Son of Man character in the gospels. First, we have at Qumran a messianic figure who speaks of his role as that of proclaiming the kingdom of God, Bultmann's first category of Son of Man logia in the gospels. Second,

Qumran presents a messianic figure who is suffering, dying, and then exalted by God to the status of a heavenly figure, Bultmann's second category. Finally, the *Hodayot* and the *War Scroll* present a Messiah who takes up the role of eschatological judge, Bultmann's third category. Thus we have at Qumran a *virtual* Son of Man, like the *actual* Son of Man in the Jesus Movement of a half-century later, and of the gospel narratives of a century later.

Of course, in articulating this messianic figure at Qumran it was impossible for that heretical messianic figure to employ the standard Enochic term for him, namely, Son of Man, which was employed by the related but later community of Enochic Judaism that became Christianity, because at Qumran that term had neither credence nor currency and would have made the heresy both extremely obvious and unnecessarily offensive. It would have amounted to really "sticking it into the face of the authorities" of the esoteric supralapsarian Qumran Community. If Knohl's argument holds any water, Jesus, the literary character who traverses the pages of canonical gospels, internalized as the second phase of his personal identity development an Essene concept of a suffering and dying Messiah (Matt 12:40, 17:12, 17:22) which had already existed for some time in an heretical form of Qumran Essenism, and which Jesus, as literary character, is depicted as having identified with the Son of Man of *First Enoch*, Daniel, and Ezekiel.

### The Progression of Images, III: Daniel's Vision

The Exalted Son of Man in Dan 7-9 is remarkable in many ways. Daniel reports a vision in which "one like a son of man was introduced to the Ancient of Days in heaven." Scholars generally agree that the term Son of Man in 7:13 means a human being or mortal, as in Ezekiel, and that the Ancient of Days is God.<sup>33</sup> It is clear in this case, contrary to the state of affairs in Ezekiel, that this male human who appears before God is called up to this lofty status for the purpose of exaltation. He is accorded a place of high honor next to God himself. Moreover, he is given power, dominion, judgment, and responsibility regarding the kingdoms and empires operating on earth.

In chapters 7-9 it is indicated that the power, dominion, judgment, and responsibility given the Son of Man are passed along to "people of the Holy Ones of the Most High." These are apparently a community of action agents on earth who carry out the earthly responsibility and power of the Son of Man to subdue the mundane powers and dominions that are represented by the four beasts in the narrative of chapters 7-9. The cosmic and transcendental model that is constructed here is a two-tiered universe in which there is limited commerce between earth and heaven. A human being has been summoned up, presumably from the earth, to meet with and receive an extraordinary commission from God. This commission involves a heavenly status from which the one like a mortal does not depart during the entire unfolding of the narrative. The divine commission also involves a divine mandate, namely, the responsibility to overpower the powers, dominions, and empires of the earth, thereby bringing in the kingdom of God on earth.



The Son of Man in this model functions, therefore, as a political and military Chief of Staff to the Most High, which explains his permanent status in heaven at the throne of God. However, through his minions he carries out field operations on earth to accomplish the objectives of his mandate. These field operations are carried out through the forces of the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High. Presumably the picture is that of the earthly operations of armies or forces of those devoted to the cause of God and the advent of his kingdom; that is, they are expediting the responsibility and command of God's Chief of Staff, the "one like a Son of Man." Presumably the field forces on earth periodically get commands and orders from the Chief of Staff in heaven. They do his work and achieve his objectives.

It seems quite clear that Jesus had just this picture in the back of his mind when he spoke to Nathanael in John 1:51, declaring that Nathanael and the multitude would see heaven opened and the angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man. With assiduous intentionality Jesus identifies himself in this passage as the Son of Man. Nathanael has just called him Son of God and King of Israel, that is, the Messiah, the Son of David, expected by the Jerusalem religious authorities. Jesus corrects Nathanael rather sharply (as he aggressively reprimanded Peter in Mark 8:29-33) and declares that Jesus' proper identity is Son of Man. Moreover, he makes it clear and certain that he is the Son of Man of heavenly status. Obviously Jesus' third stage of self-image development as Son of Man is that of the important Second Temple Jewish tradition of Dan 7-9.

Significant inferences can thence be drawn that inform us about who Jesus, as the character in literary narratives, is depicted as having understood himself to be. The passage in John 1:51 is the first Son of Man logion in the Fourth Gospel and is interesting for a number of reasons. First of all, the angelic dynamics are unexpected in that one would assume that angels would need to descend from heaven before they can ascend to heaven. However, the dynamics are the opposite here. They first ascend and then descend. The model or picture in the passage, as well as the specific language used, corresponds exactly with that of the narrative of Jacob at Bethel where, in his dream, he saw a ladder reaching from earth to heaven upon which angels first ascend and then descend.

Obviously the gospel author who tells us this story about his literary character, Jesus, had the Jacob story from Gen 28:12 ringing in the back of his head. Thus we have two potential interpretations available for John 1:51, in relationship with Dan 7-9. According to the first interpretation, the logion intends to tell us that Jesus is the figure who stands like a ladder between heaven and earth, upon whom those who travel between the two realms can make their way up and down. This would explain why heaven is open, that is, accessible by means of Jesus, who in the Gospel of John has both human and divine status. He is of the earth—is human and is the Son of Man—but he is also a heavenly being whose divinity has already been established earlier in the same chapter, namely, at the beginning of the prologue in 1:1-3. Jesus' presence on earth, particularly before Nathanael and those standing around there,<sup>34</sup> ensures that heaven is open to commerce with the earth.

Moreover, the fact that the angels ascend before they descend indicates that they have been on earth. Presumably this is consistent with the image in Dan 7-9 in that the angels, closely associated with the Son of Man in John 1:51, are obviously messengers or ministers of the Chief of Staff who have been busy conveying his instructions to the field forces on earth or carrying out those instructions on earth, and are returning to heaven for more instructions. When they get their new orders, they will then descend again.

A second possible interpretation of John 1:51 in conjunction with the picture in Dan 7-9 places less emphasis upon the exact correspondence between the details in the Johannine passage and the Jacob passage, that is, avoids identifying the Son of Man as a ladder in the gospel story. This would make the picture even clearer, in terms of the passage in Daniel, for in this case we may see the picture in the Gospel as one in which heaven is opened so that Nathanael and other earthlings<sup>35</sup> can see the Son of Man in his heavenly status near the throne of God. The angels would be ascending upon him in the sense of going from their work on earth to gather round him. Having received their new orders, they then descend to the field forces on earth, who are bringing in the kingdom of God by subduing the earthly kingdoms. "The kingdoms of this world are becoming the Kingdom of our God and of his Messiah" (Rev 11:15).

One of the two main difficulties with this construction of things, of course, lies in the fact that while Jesus, speaking to Nathanael about himself as the Son of Man, refers to the Son of Man as the ladder between earth and heaven or as exalted to a status near the divine throne, Jesus is actually standing there on terra firma in Galilee, talking to the crowd. This may not be a formidable problem, however, since the narrative has Jesus declaring that the vision of the open heaven is something Nathanael and company should anticipate at some time in the future. Nonetheless, it raises the question why Jesus is on earth, as the Son of Man, if the Danielic Son of Man does not move from his exalted heavenly status, acting on earth only through his field forces, the people of the holy ones of the Most High.

I think there are two possibilities of what the picture in the gospel author's head at that moment really was. The author meant to describe Jesus as seeing himself as the one who would eventually be exalted by God to the status of the heavenly Son of Man and seeing the passage in Daniel as a prophecy of himself, a human being, who would be called up to the role of the exalted Son of Man depicted in Daniel. From there he would direct the field operations on earth which would bring in the kingdom of God, given the fact that the first mission of the disciples to proclaim the kingdom had failed, the multitudes having left in despair and disinterest.

The alternate possibility of the picture in Jesus' head in John 1:51 is that the author has Jesus conceiving of Daniel's Son of Man as exalted to heaven long since, and seeing himself as the current earthly alter ego of that heavenly Son of Man, with the mission to



carry out the Son of Man's role of bringing in the kingdom of God on earth, while expecting eventually to be exalted to heaven and merged with the heavenly Son of Man, with whom Jesus' identity as literary character is really fused anyway.

The other problem with the suggested construction which relates Dan 7-9 and John 1:51 in Jesus' self-image as Son of Man, of course, is that there is no suggestion in Daniel of any association of the Son of Man with the Jewish Messiah or messiahs. However, it is clear that in each of the stages of the *progression* of images in Jesus' sense of self as Son of Man, in the character development of this figure in the gospel stories there is also a *progressive* sense of the messianic role of the Son of Man. It seems to me to be beyond doubt that the third stage in the development of the meaning and nature of his role as Son of Man, written into the character of Jesus by the gospel authors, is characterized by this image that is derived from Dan 7-9. Perhaps the intimate association of the Son of Man with the Messiah is a special contribution that the gospel writers offer to the varieties of Second Temple Judaism extant in their time, and they do it by the way they construct the character and self-concept of Jesus in their narratives.

It is in this context in any case that Jesus is described as seeing himself moving to an increasingly apocalyptic perspective in his self-image, his self-realization, and his understanding of what it meant for him to be the Son of Man. First, in Mark, for example, he seems to think of himself as a human being called like Ezekiel to proclaim the coming of God's reign on earth. This coming kingdom has very mundane contours and dimensions, even if it is characterized by esoteric, ascetic, and unworkable tactics and strategies. By Mark 8 and the failure of that naive mission of kingdom proclamation, the character Jesus has moved the apocalyptic metaphor up a few notches to declare the inevitability of his suffering and dying at the hands of wicked men and Gentiles. Here he picks up the second image, namely, that of the Qumran Essene suffering Messiah of the *Hodayot*, of the *Serekh ha-Yahad*, and the *War Scroll*. Soon the horizon has been raised again, and in all the gospels we begin to hear the promise that the Son of Man will suffer but then be mightily exalted. Now we have the Son of Man of Daniel in view. The apocalyptic vision has enlarged and become both cosmic and transcendental. The two worlds of the apocalyptic vision have been marked out, and the resolution of their antithesis is achieved by the exaltation of the messianic Son of Man to his status as divinely ordained Chief of Staff of earthly kingdom operations. In this exalted role he will join earth and heaven in the endeavor to bring in God's kingdom. As heavenly manager/commander of the earthly enterprise of subduing evil and establishing God's reign, he will recruit all the hosts of heaven and "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High" for this grand and inevitably victorious offensive.

#### **The Progression of Images IV: *First Enoch* 37-71**

Scholars of the Son of Man issue in the Bible have long associated with the passage in Daniel the title Jesus is given by the gospel writers. Recently attention has been given to the relationship of the Parables of Enoch and the use of the term Son of Man in

reference to Jesus. This Enochic literature with the articulate apocalyptic perspective of Essenism offers an essential component for interpreting the distinctive way in which the gospels elaborate the fourth stage in the development of Jesus' Son of Man motif. Clearly Jesus, as literary character, came on the scene of his ministry envisioning himself as the Son of Man in the very human sense of an Ezekiel-like prophet, proclaiming the advent of God's reign on earth. This image seems to be the product of the struggle with the temptations in the wilderness in which Jesus is depicted as trying to discern in what sense he is the Son of his Father, as announced by the voice he heard from heaven at his baptism. As noted above, the gospel narrative soon presents Jesus as forbidding his disciples to use terms like Messiah (Son of David) and Son of God. He insists instead upon the image of the Suffering Servant—Son of Man, as portrayed at Qumran, according to Knohl. Relatively quickly in the gospel story we get the exalted Son of Man of Dan 7:13. John's second-century gospel, which begins with a divine pre-existent Christ, moves immediately (1:51) to the exalted Son of Man of Daniel. In this regard we noted above that the second and third phases of Jesus' self-image development as Son of Man arise as a result of the failure of the first mission. The disciples returned from it reporting hopeless ineffectiveness. When the crowds fell away, Jesus wondered whether he would lose the disciples as well.

Obviously, the narrative presents Jesus' sense of mission as running into trouble at this point, and his response was to move his self-concept more toward a mythic and magical destiny, suffering Messiah of Qumran and divinely exalted and vindicated Messiah of Daniel. The fourth phase seems to become full-blown when he finally finds himself hopelessly caught in defeat and stands before Caiaphas and Pilate. There he raises the mythic imagination of the apocalyptic vision one step higher. He envisions himself as the Son of Man of *First Enoch* who leaves his transcendent "enthronement" and returns to earth on the clouds of heaven as the eschatological judge.

As Jesus is moved further along the road toward the impasse with the authorities, it dawns upon him more and more that he has set himself upon a totally destructive trajectory. The only hope for salvaging it is to move it to a divine, magical, transcendent plane. The model of the Son of Man in Daniel gave him a transcendental Son of Man whom God exalted to bring in the kingdom on earth. You cannot lose even if they defeat and kill you on earth, so long as you are certain that God's purposes guarantee your ultimate exaltation. All those who have opposed the Son of Man will be shown up for the ultimately defeated scoundrels that they really are. The narrative is ideally crafted to lead to the ultimate denouement. There is great psychological strength and empowerment in such a mythic vision of one's destiny, in the face of the vicissitudes, failures, and irresolvable impasses of life. Surely it is the inebriating power of this transcendent vision which gives this literary character, Jesus, the strength and arrogant self-confidence to violate the temple and disrupt the legally provided enterprises of the money changers, a perfectly innocent enterprise of great help to pilgrims from long distances away. He is depicted as carrying out this violation of the temple in the face of his impending defeat by the authorities in Jerusalem and in the face of the fact that he was thereby consciously throwing down the gauntlet in an ultimate form of provocation that, by his own admission, would lead to his death.



So it should not be a surprise to us that this fourth phase of the progression of images should be the apocalyptic eschatological picture from *First Enoch*. The Son of Man of the Parables of Enoch offered a model of the Son of Man being manifested in his heavenly status as the judge at the eschaton. *First Enoch* 38:3ff. picks up the term "the Righteous One," which is a designation of the Son of Man throughout the Similitudes (Parables of Enoch), and prophesies that "[w]hen the secrets of the Righteous One are revealed, he shall judge the sinners." In *1 En.* 61:8ff. the same theme moves forward, and the Son of Man is referred to as the Elect One, another frequently occurring title for him in the Parables of Enoch.

In this scripture the Lord of the Spirits, namely God,

placed the Elect One on the throne of glory; and he shall judge all the works of the holy ones in heaven above, weighing in the balance their deeds. And when he shall lift up his countenance in order to judge the secret ways of theirs, by the word of the name of the Lord of the Spirits, and their conduct, by the method of the righteous judgment of the Lord of the Spirits, then they shall all speak with one voice, blessing, glorifying, extolling, sanctifying the name of the Lord of the Spirits.

The consequences of this judgment by the Son of Man are explicated in 62:2-11, where we read, "Open your eyes and lift up your eyebrows—if you are able to recognize the Elect One!" The narrative continues, describing the day of judgment for the kings, governors, high officials, and landlords:

One half portion of them shall glance at the other half; they shall be terrified and dejected; and pain shall seize them when they see that Son of Man sitting on the throne of his glory. . . . On that day, all the kings, the governors, the high officials, and those who rule the earth shall fall down before him on their faces, and worship and raise their hopes in that Son of Man; they shall beg and plead for mercy at his feet. But the Lord of the Spirits himself will cause them to be frantic, so that they shall rush and depart from his presence. . . . So he will deliver them to the angels for punishments in order that vengeance shall be executed on them—oppressors of his children and his elect ones.

The consummation of the judgment by the Son of Man is going to be joy in heaven. In 69:27ff. Enoch tells us of the Son of Man who executes the judgment of God upon the earth at the end of time, exterminating all evil and evil ones, gathering the righteous of God into the community of God's reign, and causing blessing, glorifying, and extolling to be offered the Lord of the Spirits. This is "on account of the fact that the name of that (Son of) Man was revealed to them. . . . Thenceforth nothing that is corruptible shall be found; for that Son of Man has appeared and has seated himself upon the throne of his glory; and all evil shall disappear from before his face."

### The Immediate Religio-Cultural Setting of Jesus as a Literary Character

It seems evident, as Boccaccini claims, that the cloistered Essenes at Qumran were so supralapsarian in their concept of both sin and salvation that an eschatological Son of Man coming from heaven as judge was unnecessary and erroneous. In their view the judgment had taken place in eternity before history, and God was the transcendental judge.<sup>36</sup> However, Boccaccini points out that the urban Essenes apparently continued to follow a form of Enochic Judaism that, while it was as apocalyptic and eschatological as that of Qumran, provided more room for human freedom in the pursuit of salvation, that is, pursuit of the status of the righteous. This doctrine of free will enjoyed various degrees of quality and of emphasis in the urban Essene communities. Some documents claimed that those who wished to be numbered among the righteous could decide to resist the incursions of evil into their lives. Others suggested that humans were free to choose to do evil or to do good, despite the supralapsarian divine plan, since divine foreknowledge held precedence over divine predestination and its elections to salvation or reprobation.

It is of considerable interest that John the Baptist, sometimes thought to have been some sort of Essene, offered an even more open field of human choice with his doctrine of repentance. The gospels indicate that he claimed one could enlist oneself into the company of the righteous by simply repenting. Mark 1:4 informs us that he "appeared in the wilderness, preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." This was a remarkable move beyond the unchangeable-election theology of Qumran and the slightly more open theology of the urban Essenes.

More remarkable, of course, is the fact that Jesus is reported in the Fourth Gospel to move a large step beyond the Baptist, while building his proclamation on the theology of both the Essenes and that of John the Baptist. Jesus makes it clear that the only method for achieving membership in the company of the righteous requires simply that one believe on the Son of Man. In John 3:13-17 Jesus is made to declare that

[n]o one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of Man; and as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whosoever believes in him may have eternal life; for God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life; for God sent the Son [of Man] into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him [the Son Man]. He who believes in him is not condemned; he who does not believe is condemned already because he has not believed in the name of the only Son of God [namely, this fellow who is God's only begotten, i.e. unique, Son of Man].

This places us a long way beyond the hard-core supralapsarianism of the Qumran Essenes. It indicates that the gospels represent Jesus as pushing the metaphors of Jewish tradition, and thus of the Son of Man, a considerable distance beyond even the urban



Essenes. Herein also may lie the clue explaining the breach between Jesus and John the Baptist, so evident in the gospels. Jesus has dwarfed the importance of John's doctrine of repentance by transcending it with a gospel of belief in the salvific role of Son of Man who will be lifted up as a healing agent in God's new community as was Moses' serpent. These are all surprises considering that so much of the Jesus imagery regarding the Son of Man is derived from Enochic Essenism and its antecedents in Second Temple or Middle Judaism traditions. This leads us, therefore, along a natural trajectory into the fifth phase of the progression of Son of Man images.

### **The Progression of Images V: The Johannine Son of Man**

While the Fourth Gospel employs some of the same Son of Man logia as are found in the Synoptic Gospels, they are used in a substantially different context and with a new and innovative import. This late New Testament gospel rewrites the story of Jesus from a post-Easter perspective and after the believing community has had nearly a century to digest the import of Jesus' life and death. There is much evidence in the Gospel that it was written to establish a rather well worked out theological interpretation associated with the Jesus narrative, rather than to provide any comprehensive or coherent biographical sketch of the historic Jesus. Moreover, it is my judgment, after extensive analysis of the Son of Man logia employed by the author of the Fourth Gospel, that both the prologue and these logia are not original to the Gospel. I have elsewhere cited briefly what I think is the evidence for John 1:1-18 and the Son of Man logia being late and being interpolations into the Gospel's narrative.<sup>37</sup> Without them the story flows seamlessly from beginning to end. While the addition of 1:1-18 sets the Gospel in an entirely new and different perspective, the insertion of the logia is in most cases remarkably disruptive of the narrative. Nonetheless, the perception by the redactor that these logia were essential to the "completion" of the Gospel is likely related to the fact, as indicated above, that the community reminded him that the Son of Man logia, represented by the Synoptic Gospels as Jesus' own perception of himself, could not be ignored. The redactor gives evidence of working very hard to integrate these logia into the text in a way that does not spoil the theological intent of the original narrative, though less care is given to avoiding disruption of the narrative flow. Some of these instances of insertion reveal important indications of how the Jesus character of the Synoptic Gospels used the title Son of Man, and how the writer or redactor of the Fourth Gospel insisted upon using them. Therefore a brief survey of the implications of the use of these logia in John's Gospel is required here.

John's Gospel has fourteen references to the Son of Man. They all stand in the context of the Johannine Christology in which Jesus is identified with the pre-existent Logos at the outset of the Gospel and occasionally referred to in divine terms from that point on. He is called the incarnated Logos in 1:14, the source of the Holy Spirit of God in 1:33, and the Lamb of God in 1:36. This tone of references continues throughout the Gospel. While he is referred to as the Son of God in 1:34, 1:49, and 3:18, it seems clear that these refer-

ences do not assert or imply divinity. Nathanael makes it quite plain in 1:49 that by calling Jesus the Son of God he means that Jesus is the Messiah (Christ [1:20 and 25]), the Son of David, "King of Israel." Moreover, when Jesus refers to himself in 3:18 as the only Son of God, in whom people must believe to be saved, he is clearly referring to the Son of Man, of the foregoing verses, as that unique (only begotten) Son who is from God.

I have already referred to John 1:51 and analyzed the import of the open heaven and of the Son of Man as the cause or occasion of the commerce between the two realms of earth and heaven, in both directions, and have related that to the status and function of the Son of Man in Daniel. It is readily evident how the Son of Man as eschatological judge constitutes an extension of that image and how that judge might fit into John's model in 1:51. The important issue that this Son of Man logion reveals to us regarding Jesus' self-concept is that it indicates Jesus' impatience with Nathanael's calling him the Messiah, as the Jerusalem authorities understood the Messiah, namely the Son of David, King of Israel, and in that sense the son of God.

John 3:13 declares that "[n]o one has ascended into heaven except the one having come down from heaven." In the light of 1:51 and its reference to Gen 28:12, one must acknowledge that Jesus is referring to his having ascended into heaven at some time in the past and then descended to earth more recently, which accounts for the fact that as he speaks he is standing on the earth in the presence of Nicodemus. The Greek verbs refer to past action, and clearly Jesus is identifying himself as the Son of Man. Thus this logion implies that Dan 7:13 is one of the images which stand behind it. When we carry this line of thought down to 3:19ff., it is clear that *1 En.* 37-71 also stands in this image because Jesus cannot finish speaking of the Son of Man in this passage without referring to an apocalyptic, eschatological judgment, a notion absent from the actual function of the Son of Man in Daniel, though one may speculate that a judgment is implied in the outcome of the earthly field operations of Daniel's Son of Man, a kind of judgment carried out through the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High who throw down the empires of this world and replace them with the kingdom of God.

However, the author takes considerable pains in 3:19ff. to describe the judgment, which has come upon the world, in a manner that does not place the Son of Man in the role of judge. Obviously he realized that Jesus' use of the term had implied such a role, in keeping with Daniel and *First Enoch*, but such an idea did not comport well with the theological thrust the author or redactor wished to give to this Fourth Gospel. In 3:12-16 the Fourth Gospel has Jesus declaring that as the Son of Man he is the savior of the world. This is the Son of Man who has ascended into heaven long ago and has recently descended from heaven and speaks to Nicodemus. It makes sense for Jesus to remark in 3:14 that it is in this context that the Son of Man should be raised up, just as Moses raised up the serpent on a staff of wood so that all could see it and be healed. For all who believed, the serpent became God's instrument of deliverance, and so with the Son of Man (3:16-17). Those who did not believe condemned themselves to great loss.



Jesus continues the monologue naturally in 3:18–21 with claims in which he contrasts this salvation and judgment. Salvation is the exclusive job of the Son of Man, as indicated in 3:17b. Judgment is not the job of the Johannine Son of Man (3:17a), but is a thing people bring on themselves by failing to believe in the name of *God's* Son of Man. This judgment is an automatic consequence of the fact that "the light has entered the world, and men loved darkness rather than light" (3:19ff.). Here we hear echoes of 1:9–13, particularly 1:9–11, where we are informed that the light has entered the world but the world could not recognize it.

Since this entire pericope in 3:18–21 is a reference to the Son of Man, who happens also to be God's only or unique Son, it is natural that the text should address the Enochic issue of eschatological judgment. If we are speaking of the Enochic Son of Man, one would expect that we must speak of judgment upon this world, since the Enochic tradition informs us that the identity and role of the Son of Man is that of the eschatological judge who will descend from heaven apocalyptically and judge those who are evil as evil and those who are righteous as "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High." However, in this paragraph in 3:18–21, Jesus reverses expectations by asserting that the Son of Man, who incidentally is also the divine Son of God, as we already know from 1:1–3, 14, and 34, is not the judge but the savior.

The author goes out of his way in this pericope to have Jesus distinguish radically between the Enochic Son of Man as eschatological judge, and the Johannine Son of Man who has come in the man from Nazareth, and whose exclusive task it is to save the world which God loves (3:16–17). All those who believe on this kind of Son of Man will be saved by reason of their faith in him or in his name, Son of Man, God's unique divine Son. All believers are "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High," and they demonstrate their faith by their behavior (3:18–21). They hate evil and live authentically. If they do not, they judge themselves. The presence of the Son of Man and people's reaction to it constitutes an existential situation of judgment. Clearly the author intends this pericope to be specifically about the Son of Man introduced in 3:13, and to indicate that this Son of Man is not an eschatological divine judge but a divine savior. This is confirmed by John 12:44–50. There we read: "If anyone hears my sayings and does not keep them, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects me and does not receive my sayings has a judge; the word that I have spoken will be his judge." That is, such a person brings judgment down upon himself or herself, just because of the way in which things work in the moral universe. That is just the way life is designed. The natural processes wreak judgment upon those who follow a course that is not the righteous one designed by God and provided for in the presence of the salvific Son of Man in this world. Belief and unbelief, like all virtue and vice, are their own reward. As in Ps 1, "The Lord recognizes the way of the righteous, but the way of the wicked is a form of perishing."

### *The Prequalification of the Son of Man*

It is clear, moreover, though none of the literature has called attention to this, that throughout this passage of 3:12–21, there are ringing in the ears of the author/redactor of John's Gospel the words of Prov 30:4, "Who has ascended to heaven and then come down?" (4a). The context refers to the fact that no one has performed such a transcendental sequence and that such an ascent and descent would have been necessary for any person to perform if he were to have "learned wisdom" or have "knowledge of the Holy One," characteristics which are specially accorded to Jesus as Son of Man throughout the Fourth Gospel, particularly in 3:11–21. It has already been established in John 1–2 that these are also the qualities required in him who is to speak for God, save the world, and bring the forces of the spirit into the inner life of God's people, thus bringing in the kingdom. Proverbs 30:4c asks of that hypothetical person, "What is God's name, and *what is his Son's name?*" That pericope ends with the claim that "[e]very word of God proves true; he is a shield to those who take refuge in him." Those who do not take such refuge find themselves in a false sense of reality. They bring judgment upon themselves. They judge themselves.

The sequence of phrases in Prov 30 is too similar to those in John 3:11–21 to be coincidental, and even more remarkable is the fact that the order is exactly the same in both passages. In Prov 30:3–6 and John 3 we have this sequence: 1) "learning wisdom" from heaven and having "knowledge of the Holy One" (Prov 30:3 and John 3:11–12); 2) ascent to heaven and descent from heaven (Prov 30:4a and John 3:13a); 3) naming the son of the Holy One (Prov 30:4c and John 3:13b–14); 4) taking refuge in God's word of truth saves one (Prov 30:5 and John 3:15–18a, 21); 5) judging oneself by disbelieving or falsifying God's word (Prov 30:6 and John 3:18b–20). As noted above, the fifth item in this sequence is further emphasized by John 12:44–50 where it is said that those who reject Jesus as Son of Man condemn themselves, or, as Prov 30:6 declares, "find themselves rebuked by being caught in a false sense of reality." Unfortunately we have no LXX reading for Prov 30:1–31:9, with which we might compare the specific wording of the Greek text of John 3.

The statement in John 3:16–17 about God sending the Son into the world to save it is a statement about the descent of the Son of Man (3:13), giving further meaning to 1:14. Whereas Enochians would have expected him to descend eschatologically as the judge, he has descended already and enfleshed himself in Jesus of Nazareth as the savior of the world. He has come in time to redeem it, not at the end of time, to end it. It seems to me quite remarkable that this pericope, particularly 3:16–17, has been consistently read incorrectly as a reference to the divine Son of God as though he were someone other than or in a different role than the Son of Man who is the subject of this passage, or as though the Son of God were a different phase of Jesus' existence from that of the Son of Man. Clearly the references in 3:18 to God's unique Son are references directly to that subject, the Son of Man, one of whose characteristics is that he is unique, and from God. Obviously it has been difficult for the believing community, and the scholarly community as well, to see this text in and of itself, without heavy theological overlay. It is precisely this confusion which led the church



fathers to a radically different use of both titles, Son of Man and Son of God, splitting them into the two natures of the Christ of the Ecumenical Christian Creeds.

Regarding the first three Son of Man logia (1:51, 3:13, 3:14) in the Fourth Gospel, one must conclude, therefore, that the author intends to identify the Son of Man in a number of remarkable ways. First, he reemphasizes the transcendental character of the Son of Man (1:1-3, 1:51, 3:13) as the one who, having ascended to the throne of the Ancient of Days, has come down from heaven. Thus he knows about the heavenly things, is uniquely related to God, is the only one who has seen God (1:18, 3:11-12). He brings the divine spirit and illumination into the world to insinuate it into the inner life of humans, thus affording them salvation and eternal life (1:9, 1:12, 3:2, 3:16-17, 3:34, 3:36a).

Second, he asserts that the Son of Man does not come as the eschatological judge but is a savior whose presence brings salvation and, incidentally, precipitates judgment in those who are not saved because they lack a response of faith (1:29, 3:18-21, 3:36b). Third, it is the Son of Man who is the one bringing God's spirit, God's salvific action, God's presence, and God's illuminating truth that affords eternal life to those who then live as authentically illumined by it (1:32-33, 3:36). Fourth, eschatological judgment is already present and will come at the end of time as well, but it is an accidental consequence of the presence of the Son of Man and not what God intends, since God intends to save the whole world through the Son of Man, and not condemn it (3:16-17). Fifth, this Son of Man is, incidentally, God's "only begotten [unique] Son" (3:16, 3:18). These logia shift the focus of Son of Man theology in the Fourth Gospel away from the Enochic orientation upon the function of a divine judge and toward a salvific coalescence of the rather robust person of the Son of Man with the literary character, Jesus of Nazareth, while at the same time absorbing both into the Johannine Logos Christology.

It is of special interest, therefore, that the very next Son of Man logion, in 5:27, specifically refers to Jesus, the Son of Man, as the judge. It claims that God, the Father, gave the Son of Man authority or power (*exousia*) to be able to judge, because he is the Son of Man (*hoti huios anthropou estin*). One cannot be more obviously Enochic in reference than this. This logion comes as a shock, in the light of Jesus' monologue in 3:1-21 regarding the Son of Man as savior and specifically not as judge. The larger context of 5:27 is important to our understanding of this passage. After Jesus' monologue in 3:1-21 there follows a dissertation by John the Baptist which affirms and confirms the claims made in Jesus' address to Nicodemus. The Baptist confirms that to know true wisdom of and about God one must have come from above, that Jesus fits that requirement, and that he brings with him both the word and spirit of God, affording eternal life to believers and making unbelievers their own judges.

Chapter four presents the narrative of Jesus and the Samaritan woman at Jacob's well at Sychar, Samaria. The text declares that Jesus is more than a prophet and makes the claim in 4:25-26 that he is the Messiah, as understood by the Samaritans. That story is fol-

lowed by Jesus' instructions regarding the harvest that awaits his mission, immediately upon which he converts a Samaritan village by his words, is welcomed in Galilee, and heals the son of a Capernaum official. These events confirm the claims made in 3:1-21. Chapter five starts with Jesus' return to Jerusalem for the "feast of the Jews," where he healed the man on the Sabbath at the pool of Bethesda, embroiling himself in a conflict with the authorities. Here he concludes his arguments of defense against their condemnation for his breach of the Torah regarding the Sabbath by making the claim that, as the Son of Man, he simply does those things which he has seen of his Father. The rest of the chapter simply recites that Jesus does the works that he has seen his Father do and speaks the words that he has from his Father.

So chapter five, in which this surprising logion appears about the Son of Man having the inherent characteristics and functions of judge, is a restatement, with operational illustrations, of Jesus' monologue of chapter three, reemphasized in that same chapter by John's dissertation on Jesus. The factors are as follows: Jesus has all his wisdom and understanding from heaven and from the fact that he has seen God and is commissioned by him (3:11-13, 5:10-18). He enacts and speaks the word of God with authority and power given him by God (3:16-17 and 5:19-20, 31-37a). His word is salvation and eternal life to those who believe in him (3:15-18, 5:25-30). Those who fail to believe that word bring themselves into judgment (3:19-21, 5:37b-47). So it is clear that this matrix of chapter five coordinates precisely with the structure of chapter three. In chapter three, however, there is a radical denial of the role of the Son of Man as judge, and great pains are taken to describe him as the divine savior. Into the corollary text of chapter five, however, is thrust this bold statement that the Son of Man is given "authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man" (5:27). This does not say that the primary identity of the Son of Man is that of a judge. Nor does it tell us what is so special about the Son of Man that makes it natural for him to be called a judge. It says he has the *exousia* to execute judgment; that is, he has this potential function.

In 5:30, however, Jesus makes a disclaimer on this by saying, "I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me." Obviously he is declaring that God is the judge and he judges by the articulation of his word, as we learned from 3:19-21. Moreover, in 5:45 Jesus makes another disclaimer: "Do not think that I shall accuse (judge?) you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" Obviously, Jesus, or the author/redactor of the Gospel, finds the identification of the Son of Man as judge to be infelicitous and comes round finally to the point made in 3:17 that he is not the judge of the unbelievers, for they stand judged on their own account. Their deeds do not conform to their own law nor to God's word.

Raymond E. Brown thinks that it is obvious that Dan 7:13 stands behind the Son of Man logion in 5:27, since the definite article appears with neither noun in the phrase or title in either passage, and this is the only time in the Fourth Gospel when the article is



absent.<sup>38</sup> He argues that the Daniel passage is the source of the notion in Johannine literature that Jesus is the eschatological judge. He says that we do not find here the typical Father-Son terminology characteristic of John but that instead "we find the 'Son of Man,' a title well known in the Synoptic tradition but not so frequent in John. . . . As the title appears in vs. 27, it seems to echo the *locus classicus* of the OT, Dan vii 13, where the figure of 'a son of man' appears in the context of final divine judgment. And final judgment seems to be what is in the mind of John v 26-30."

It is nearly humorous to note Brown's error in interpretation, since it is the case that though the phraseology may be similar in both passages, the "one like a son of man" in Daniel is not a judge, nor is the scene eschatological in the sense of terminating history. It merely describes the coming of God's rule in the world during the course of history, a rule which may be supervised by the one like a son of man or a human being who resides in heaven (7:14), but a rule which is carried out on earth by "the people of the Holy Ones of the Most High" (7:27). Replacement of the powers of this world by the kingdom of God may be a kind of judgment, but it is neither particularly apocalyptic nor at all of the eschaton. Moreover, it is not an action which involves a direct personal intervention by the Son of Man. The Son of Man in Dan 7 is neither a judge nor eschatological, though some sort of apocalyptic conditions may be implied. The Son of Man of *First Enoch* and the virtual Son of Man of Qumran seem to fit the picture in John 5:27 much better.

If 1 En. 61-62 and 69-71<sup>39</sup> lie behind John 5:27, we may conclude that those reading this narrative, or witnessing the event described in it, were expected to understand naturally the import of the rationale that the principal figure in the text had the authority of a judge "because he is the Son of Man." Moreover, the virtual Son of Man of Qumran is an eschatological judge. Since both of these figures are judges, probably with an eschatological function in that capacity, those in Jesus' purported audience at this point who were Enochian Jews would have been familiar with the apocalyptic eschatology, particularly in 1 En. 61-62, in which the Elect One, identified as the Son of Man, is said to be enthroned as judge of all the rulers and authorities on earth, as well as of all the righteous in earth and heaven. Since the author of the Fourth Gospel plainly assumes the audience would understand why the Son of Man would be judge, we can conclude that the multitudes who found Jesus appealing tended to be apocalyptic or Enochian Jews, namely urban Essenes.<sup>40</sup>

However, this only heightens the difficulty raised by the apparent insertion of this Enochic element into the middle of what seems to be a quite different kind of narrative. Closer examination of 5:19-29, the immediate context of this fourth logion in John's Gospel, confirms the claim that 5:27 is an insertion of alien material. In 5:19-21 Jesus describes the way in which his will, thoughts, and actions are really those of the Father. The intent of this line of teaching is to lead up to verse 21: "As the Father raises the dead and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom he wills." This same line of thought is picked up again in 5:24: "Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears my word and believes

him who sent me has eternal life; he does not come into judgment, but has passed from death to life." There follows then a natural continuation of the narrative in 5:25 and 5:28–29 regarding hearing the voice of the Son, which is really the word of the Father, and experiencing resurrection as a consequence. This thought about hearing the word of God and being saved is continued in 31–38, completely in keeping with John 1–4.

Thus there is no need nor natural place in this line of thought for 5:22 ("The Father judges no one but gives all judgment to the Son") and 27 ("[The Father] has given [the Son] authority to execute judgment, because he is the Son of Man"). This is particularly important to observe in the light of Jesus' disclaimers in 5:30 ("I can do nothing on my own authority; as I hear, I judge; and my judgment is just, because I seek not my own will but the will of him who sent me") and 39–47. In the latter Jesus implies, as in John 1–4, that he does not judge people. Their own law judges them, and the presence of God's word judges them. Verses 45–47 say, "Do not think that I shall accuse you to the Father; it is Moses who accuses you, on whom you set your hope. If you believed Moses, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe my words?" So 5:22 and 5:27 must be insertions imported into an earlier narrative about the Jesus character as a savior, which insertions have the purpose of making it more Enochic, apocalyptic, and perhaps eschatological. This is done by trying to find a place into which to fit the Son of Man sayings which the community knew were associated directly with Jesus' self-concept and his purported personal sense of identity.

The remaining Son of Man logia in the Fourth Gospel seem to confirm this hypothesis, since they present, with rare exceptions, the salvific image of Jesus as Son of Man, without reference to an Enochic judge. John 6:27 and 6:40 indicates that the Son of Man is specially chosen by God to give humanity eternal life. John 6:53 affirms the same message, representing the act of belief in the Son of Man as including eating Jesus' flesh and drinking his blood. John 6:61b–62 declares that if this eating and drinking the Son of Man's flesh and blood scandalizes anyone, what astonishment and scandal will they feel when they see the Son of Man, Jesus, re-ascending to heaven, that is, being exalted by God again to his heavenly status!

John 8:28 merely informs us that "[w]hen you shall have lifted up the Son of Man, then you shall know that I [Jesus] am he, and of myself I do nothing, but as the Father taught me, this I speak." To be lifted up was street language for being killed. In modern street-gang language the equivalent would be "to off someone." In military slang one might refer to wasting an enemy soldier or contingent. This logion is certainly a reference to Jesus' impending death at the hands of the Jerusalem religious authorities and the Roman occupation forces, as the gospel drama is brought to its denouement. However, this is not a reference to some kind of atonement theology associated with the crucifixion; as is the case with Moses' bronze serpent, it is a reference to the act which will place Jesus in everyone's view as the symbol of divine healing, implemented by the act of seeing him as God's



savior and believing in his name, Son of Man. This is not atonement theology but demonstration theology. The remaining logia in John refer to faith in the Son of Man (9:35) and to God being glorified in the glorification of the Son of Man (12:23, 13:31, 14:13, 17:1). This glorification clearly refers both to earthly vindication in the public eye and to the promised (6:61b–62) re-ascent to heavenly status.

The import of this Johannine post-Easter report on Jesus as the Son of Man is important for us in completing the picture of final development of the character of Jesus and that character's self-conscious sense of his own identity in the unfolding narrative. It indicates that the author of the Fourth Gospel wrote a narrative in which Jesus is presented as a rather straightforward representative of God whose mission is to bring salvation to the world. Salvation, in this case, means such an incitement of inner spiritual meaning and illumination in a person's thought, faith, life, and relationships as makes it evident that the Holy Spirit of God is a vital force in them. Into this narrative is injected a set of Son of Man sayings that interrupt the narrative at almost every place they are inserted, at least at every point prior to the logion at 6:27. From 6:27 onward the logia are all fitted into the narrative so as to reinforce the original thrust of the Gospel regarding salvation.

### *Summary of the Johannine Data*

It is my sense that the original narrative of the Fourth Gospel began at John 1:19 with the story of John the Baptist and his encounter with Jesus at his baptism. This was followed by John's heroic references to Jesus' nature and role and Jesus' encounter with John's disciples in which he announces that great things are about to happen. Then the narrative moved, without the Son of Man logion in 1:51, directly to Jesus doing the promised great things, at the wedding at Cana, which caused the disciples to believe on him as God's agent of change and salvation, bringing in the reign of God in the world. This section of the story ends at 2:11. John 2:11 is a clumsy attempt at inserting a transitional interpolation, inserted so that the original narrative can pick up again in Jerusalem. In John 2:13 we are in the Holy City and into Jesus' final week. This opens with Jesus throwing down the gauntlet by "cleansing the temple." He follows this with an explication of the nature of the salvation he brings, articulated in the Nicodemus pericope. The narrative of Holy Week continues until John 19:42.

I take it that this was the main body of the original story, John 1:19–19:42, excepting the Son of Man logia. That leaves the Prologue as John 1:1–18, the resurrection stories in John 20:1–21:25, and the Son of Man logia to be added, apparently with two purposes in mind. First, it provided a symmetrical packaging of the Gospel while introducing a transcendental picture of Jesus, as divine savior, incorporating the community's convictions or testimony regarding the restored vitality of Jesus, as the divine and resurrected Christ (Son of God, Messiah). The logia about eating and drinking the Son of Man's flesh and blood and those regarding the glorification, while reinforcing the savior theme, shift the direction

of the original narrative by closing the Gospel with a transcendental perspective. When we consider the addition of the prologue at the beginning, the transcendental ending seems like something of a symmetrical balance.

In remarkable contrast with the Gospel of Mark, the final form of the Gospel of John begins in heaven and ends in heaven, begins with a transcendental Logos and ends with a dramatically resurrected and ascending Christ, begins with the descent to incarnation of the divine into mundane flesh and ends with a glorified body and the promised return to the heavenly status and divine nature. This motive for adding the prologue and the resurrection narratives may have been an original force in the creation of the Gospel and thus may be the work of the original author. However, it does not seem so because the prologue and the resurrection narratives appear to me, contrary to the opinion of many other worthy scholars, to be linguistically and stylistically additions to the original Gospel, both in content and in semantics.

Second, the reason for inserting the Son of Man logia into the Gospel narrative obviously arises from an ulterior motive. It can have been motivated by only one thing. Someone in the Johannine community, and probably the believing community in general, knew that you could not tell the Jesus story, even as late as the second century, without acknowledging the purported centrality of Jesus' insistence upon his identity as the Son of Man. Thus this multifaceted Jewish tradition, from Ezekiel to Daniel to *1 En.* 37-71, had to be taken into account if the Gospel was to reflect the awareness and confession of the general Christian community. So the redactor inserted them into the story about Jesus as savior, doing his best to shear them of all their Enochic overtones regarding the Son of Man as eschatological judge.

### III. Conclusion

#### A Fifth Alternative

The tougher things got, the more Jesus moved, as a character in the drama, into his own mythology, a mythic worldview he progressively borrowed from Ezekiel, Qumran, Daniel, and *First Enoch*. The outcome of this combination of Sons of Man from Jewish tradition, recast in terms of an apocalyptic eschatology, provoked by the demise of the naive idealism accorded to the character of Jesus in the story, was the production of a Jesus of the gospel narratives who is unique in history but, nonetheless, distinctively Jesus the Jew. The thing that made this Jesus of the gospel narratives distinctive and memorable was that he is described as rejecting all the forms of Judaism extant at his time and offering a fifth alternative, the Son of Man as savior rather than judge. This is nailed down definitively in the Fourth Gospel, and it seems to be the insight that Paul caught on the Damascus road and explicated, producing a unitary perspective of the meaning of Jesus, as a new kind of Messiah.

There were four prominent kinds of Judaism in vogue at the time of Jesus.<sup>41</sup> The Sadducees did not believe in an afterlife and thus looked for a Messiah who would bring



back the political and social golden age of David's kingdom, throwing off all foreign oppression, reestablishing Israelite autonomy and empire (Isa. 61), and ensuring the subservience to Israel of all the nations. So their expected Messiah was the Son of David, a man who would reestablish the kingdom. This form of Messiah Jesus rejected in the third temptation, refusing to bow down to the notion of saving the world by resorting to power, as a new Alexander the Great. Jesus is greater than the temple that the Sadducees, as Zadokites, wanted to control.

The Pharisees believed in the Mosaic Torah as the redeeming agent of Israelite society, convinced that if the external environment in the community could be renewed, the true nature of Israel as God's people could be restored and guaranteed. This could be accomplished by disciplined conformity to the Mosaic Torah and regard for the hedge of 613 laws the Pharisees had built around it. God's kingdom would then reign in the spirit, the society, and the politics of Israel. Jesus rejected this notion in the first temptation, refusing to save the world by manipulating the social conditions of society, changing stones to bread, and solving the problems of the poor and needy—a kind of alternative to the Roman “bread and circuses” to keep the natives quiet. Jesus claimed to be greater than the Torah.

The Essenes, excluding the Qumran Community, believed in the apocalyptic world in which evil and good ranged against each other in a cosmic struggle including heaven and earth. The outcome of the struggle was not clear regarding the triumph of God or the Anti-God, their expected Messiah thus being the figure of the Enochic Son of Man who would come at the eschaton as judge of the living and the dead. Jesus rejected this more magical Messiah in the second temptation, refusing the role of an otherworldly or transcendental character who could jump from the temple and captivate crowds with such magical manipulation. Jesus is greater than the temple that the Essenes want to purify. This is related to his refusal to continue his healing ministry in Galilee when the crowds become preoccupied with the magic of his miracles, the signs and wonders, and did not hear his message about the impending advent of the divine kingdom.

The Samaritans believed in a Messiah “like Moses” (Deut 18:15), a spiritual renewer, which Jesus is accused of being in the Gospel of John, a charge he rejects there also, with claims of being greater than Moses. The Qumran Community had no Son of Man theology, except for the apparently heretical element present there in the decade before Jesus' birth, which championed an unconventional theology of a Suffering Servant-Messiah. That Messiah seems in many ways to look like a virtual Son of Man similar to that of the Synoptic Gospels.

By the arrival of the Fourth Gospel on the scene of the life of the second-century Christian movement, Jesus is depicted as offering a fifth alternative: the Son of Man as Savior, purveyor of a radical kind of universal grace-salvation, a perspective Paul seems to have caught as early as 65 C.E.

### Jesus' Psychospiritual Completion in the Gospel Drama

The Jesus of the narrative gospel drama is apparently characterized by the Synoptic Gospel authors as building his own role and self-image as he moved along the explorative pilgrimage of his life. He was doing life and fashioning its shape right in the middle of the action of living out what he increasingly perceived to be his divinely ordered destiny. So Jesus, the Jew, as Son of Man, apparently began his ministry believing he was, like Ezekiel, a human Son of Man called to a prophetic role of proclaiming the impending advent of the reign of God on earth. When his mission failed, he ratcheted his self-image as Son of Man upward a number of notches to the role of the Suffering Servant-Messiah of the Qumran heresy evident in some of the *Thanksgiving Hymns* (*Hodayot*) and the *War Scroll*, foreseeing the impasse with the Jewish religious authorities for which he seemed to be headed. As the trajectory of his conflict with the power people in Jerusalem and with the audiences in Galilee progressed toward open opposition, Jesus indicated that he realized this collision course would lead to his death but that God would vindicate him by an exaltation to a heavenly status similar to that of the one like a Son of Man in Daniel. In the final moments of his life, when he was inescapably a victim of the Jewish and Roman authorities, he escalated his vision of what it meant to be the Son of Man to the point of seeing himself in the role of eschatological judge who would return on the clouds of heaven on the last day and vindicate the righteous while exterminating unrighteousness. In John's fashioning of the drama, as we have seen above, Jesus is depicted as distancing himself from that Essene notion and declaring himself as *not* judge but savior.

The gospel authors intend to present the character of Jesus as one who obviously envisioned a transcendental myth of the Son of Man, progressively composed of the four main images taken from available Jewish tradition. As the progress of his ministry became increasingly lethal to him, Jesus, the lead character in this drama, is moved more and more into a composite Son of Man mythology, until he became captivated and captured by it. He progressively identified himself as the lead character in his own apocalyptic drama and then lost all poetic distance from his role, internalizing that figure as his own real self, completing the development of the character.

Surely, at this point the drama has Jesus moving rather surefootedly into his own delusion. Is it any wonder, then, that by the beginning of the second century this vision of the Son of Man had been revised, by the Fourth Gospel, to eliminate the notion of the Enochic eschatological judge, turning Jesus as Son of Man, instead, into the divine incarnate Suffering Servant, who carries out a new kind of messianic role as savior of the world? In this role he is depicted as demonstrating the unconditional grace of God for all humanity and representing in his presence in the world the reign of God, operational in his ministry—representing by his presence, as well, life on God's eternal plane, available for all by the infusion of God's word and spirit.



I am compelled once again, after rehearsing in detail the way in which the gospel sources, particularly the Johannine community, developed the character of the Jesus figure in their dramatic narratives, to ask what it might have been about the historic Jesus that made it possible to generate such a remarkable literary work around him as the main character. The thing that has functioned throughout history as the source of consolation and hope for perplexed humanity is not the historic Jesus, surely not the historical Jesus, but the literary character of Jesus that we have in the gospels. He has been an adequately developed literary character to carry the enormous symbolic drama of transcendent idealism, personal endurance, consummate faith, religious certitude, and vibrant human spirituality through prosperity and adversity, triumph and tragedy, pleasure and pain, life and death, for an innumerable multitude of joyful believers in the Christian gospel of divine grace. What did he have that he could generate such a resilient force for good?

I am persuaded that in the end the final criterion which affords an authentic warrant for any religion is captured in a simple question: "Will it bury your dead child?" For twenty centuries the mythic drama of Jesus of Nazareth empowered tragically grieving parents to stand at the brink of an empty grave and gently lower their lost child into it, and survive, go on, love again, live again, and hope again. That mythic drama also empowered civilizations, generating the grandest of idealisms. It was not the historical Jesus who did that, nor even the historic Jesus whom we cannot rediscover. It was the literary character of Jesus, from the narrative drama of the gospels, and from the confessional myths made of it. What did the man behind that story have that made that drama and its myth so vitalizing? That the myth is powerful and empowering is no mystery. We see and know it in operational practicality every day. But what was it about the historic son of man (*bar enosh, ben Adam*) behind the literary character that made it possible for him to generate and carry the transcendental weight and power of that myth? That will forever be the irresolvable mystery.

**The following bibliographic abbreviations are used in the notes:**

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> . Edited by D. N. Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
DJD	Discoveries in the Judaean Desert
JBL	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha: Supplement Series
NTL	New Testament Library
OTP	<i>Old Testament Pseudepigrapha</i> . Edited by J. H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1983–1985
RevQ	<i>Revue de Qumran</i>
SBLDS	Society of Biblical Literature Dissertation Series
STDJ	Studies on the Texts of the Desert of Judah

### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hal Childs, in *The Myth of the Historical Jesus and the Evolution of Consciousness* (SBLDS 179; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2000), carefully distinguishes between the terms *history*, *historic*, *historical*, and *historiography*. The first he takes to refer to the unfolding flow of reality through time. The second refers to the actual persons or events that existed or took place in history. The third describes the fabric of our memory of history or an historic figure or event, and our attempt to recover the original or real person or event. This, Childs persuasively argues, is never possible because our attempt to recover the original and the real in history is always colored by our vision and perception of it; thus it is always mythic to that degree. The fourth term describes the process of our writing our perception of the historical, thus the writing of our mythological report on history. This set of concepts will be used in this monograph. See Childs, pp. 56, 94, 97ff., and more generally the entire argument of his stunningly important book.

<sup>2</sup> The phrase in quotation marks occurs in the titles of Schweitzer's and Robinson's books on the search for the original Jesus (see the Bibliography to this monograph); therefore, I am repeating it here in this form. But in Hal Childs' categories the term in these titles would be "Historic Jesus."

<sup>3</sup> See n. 1 above.

<sup>4</sup> If in this way we can analyze the literary character of Jesus, perhaps others will be able as a result to ask with greater clarity who the historic Jesus might or must have been. That might make it more possible to discern something of what kind of person is required, standing behind the literary character, to make the gospel stories authentically possible. That is, I may, with this literary study, open the way for someone to raise the question with greater cogency who the historic Jesus would need to have been to make that literary character possible. However, that is a task for another study, and if Hal Childs is correct, little that is definitive of the historic Jesus can be accomplished in that direction in any case.

<sup>5</sup> Rudolf Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* (trans. G. R. Beasley-Murray; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1971), and *Theology of the New Testament* (trans. K. Grobel; 2 vols.; New York: Scribner, 1951–1955).

<sup>6</sup> Mark 13:26, 14:62, Matt 16:27–28 and 24:27–25:31, and Luke 21:27, 22:69, for example.

<sup>7</sup> Throughout this paper, translations of biblical texts are mine.

<sup>8</sup> Marvin A. Sweeney, *Ezekiel: Zadokite Priest and Visionary Prophet of the Exile* (Occasional Papers 41; Claremont, Calif.: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 2001).



- 9 Margaret S. Odell, "You Are What You Eat: Ezekiel and the Scroll," *JBL* 117 (1998): 229–48.
- 10 Sweeney, *Ezekiel*, 5–6.
- 11 Donald Capps, *Jesus: A Psychological Biography* (St. Louis: Chalice Press, 2000).
- 12 Florentino García Martínez, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English* (2d ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 7 and 13–14.
- 13 H. E. Tödt, *The Son of Man in the Synoptic Tradition* (NTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1965), 91; see also 37.
- 14 García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 13–14.
- 15 George W. E. Nickelsburg, "Son of Man," *ABD* 6:138.
- 16 Israel Knohl, *The Messiah before Jesus: The Suffering Servant of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (trans. D. Maisel; Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- 17 *Ibid.*
- 18 *Ibid.*, 75ff.
- 19 *Ibid.*, 76.
- 20 *Ibid.* Cf. also Eileen Schuller, "431. 4QHodayot<sup>c</sup>," in Esther Chazon et al., *Qumran Cave 4 XX: Poetical and Liturgical Texts, Part 2* (DJD 29; Oxford: Clarendon, 1999), 199–208; Esther Eshel, "The Identification of the 'Speaker' of the Self-Glorification Hymn," in *The Provo International Conference on the Dead Sea Scrolls* (ed. D. W. Parry and E. Ulrich; STDJ 30; Leiden: Brill, 1999), 619–35; Esther Eshel, "471b. 4QSelf-Glorification Hymn," in *Qumran Cave 4 XX*, 427–28; Esther Eshel, "4Q471b: A Self-Glorification Hymn," *RevQ* 17 (1996): 175–203. Cf. García Martínez, *Dead Sea Scrolls Translated*, 317–61 for 1QH<sup>a</sup>, 362–428 for 4Q427, 369–70 for 4Q431, and 115–20 for 4Q491.
- 21 Knohl, *Messiah before Jesus*, 80.
- 22 See n. 28 below.
- 23 John J. Collins, *Apocalypticism in the Dead Sea Scrolls* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 147.
- 24 Knohl, *Messiah before Jesus*, 42.
- 25 *Ibid.*, 44. Do we hear at this point a memory of the transgressor Jezebel, who was cast into the street dead, for the dogs to eat, as in 1 Kgs 21:23, and 2 Kgs 9:36–37?
- 26 Knohl, *Messiah before Jesus*, 45–46. It should be noted that Knohl goes beyond the narrative in Daniel here, in that the latter has no Son of Man who "would return, descending from above with the clouds of heaven, surrounded by angels." That language is of much later derivation and from far different sources.
- 27 Knohl, *Messiah before Jesus*, 3.
- 28 Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 119–62.
- 29 *Ibid.*, 134
- 30 *Ibid.*, 137–38 and 147–48.
- 31 *Ibid.*, 149.
- 32 Unfortunately, it has not been possible for me to examine the manuscripts and fragments themselves, but only the available photographs. On the face of it there seems to be some cogency to

Knohl's claim regarding the state of the manuscripts as a result of their being intentionally torn—as well as intentionally preserved. However, in a personal conversation with James H. Charlesworth over a superb Italian dinner at the Villa Villoresi in Florence during The First Enoch Seminar: The International Conference on Second Temple Judaism (19–23 June 2001), that notable Dead Sea Scrolls scholar stated that he believes it is likely that the fragmentary character of the remains of these hymnic manuscripts is a result of the same process of deterioration from age, exposure, and vermin which caused the fragmentation of other Dead Sea scrolls. Moreover, he does not think highly of Israel Knohl's argument.

<sup>33</sup> Philip B. Munoa III, in a lecture delivered in 1995 at the University of Michigan, Department of Near Eastern Studies, argued on the basis of the *Testament of Abraham* that the Ancient of Days in Daniel 7 is Adam in a transcendent state. This thesis was published in more elaborated form in *Four Powers in Heaven: The Interpretation of Daniel 7 in the Testament of Abraham* (JSPSup 28; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998).

<sup>34</sup> Notice the shift to the plural verb in John 1:51, in contrast with the singular verb in 1:48 and 1:50a.

<sup>35</sup> The verbs in the pericope have been singular while Jesus addressed Nathanael. Now as Jesus launches into the Son of Man logion, the verbs are all plural, suggesting an insertion of alien material: "You, the crowd standing around here, shall see . . ."

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*.

<sup>37</sup> J. Harold Ellens, "The Son of Man in the Fourth Gospel" (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 2003).

<sup>38</sup> Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John (i–xii)* (AB 29; Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1966), 220.

<sup>39</sup> See *OTP* 1:49 n. g2, where the editor, James H. Charlesworth, indicates that at this place a variant reading interpolates, "And he sat on the throne of his glory; and the presidency of the judgment was given unto the Son of Man."

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*.

<sup>41</sup> Cf. Gabriele Boccaccini, *Roots of Rabbinic Judaism: An Intellectual History, from Ezekiel to Daniel* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002).



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